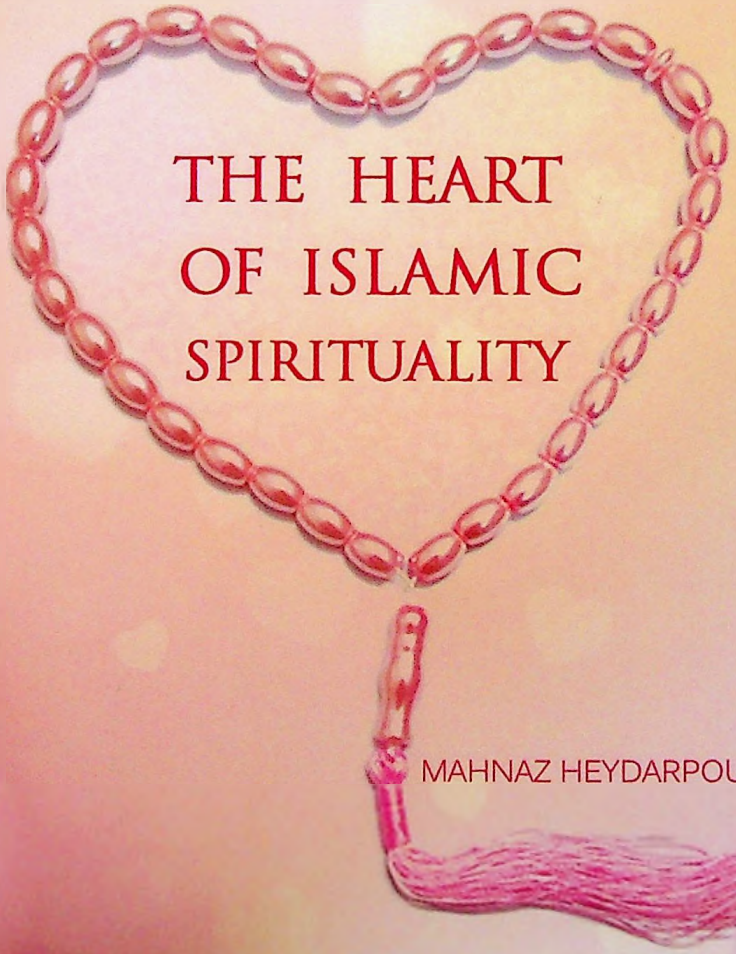
LOVE



THE HEART OF ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY

MAHNAZ HEYDARPOUR

In my view, it is possible to summarise the core of Islamic spirituality in two points: first to be attentive and mindful of God whole-heartedly while establishing a close relation with Him based on love; and, second, loving and serving His people.

Centre for Cultural
and Ethical Studies

Institute of Islamic Studies
www.ic-el.com

In the Name of God, the Beneficent the Merciful

LOVE

The Heart of

Islamic Spirituality

Love

The Heart of Islamic Spirituality

Mahnaz Heydarpour

ISBN 978 1 904934 31 8

© Institute of Islamic Studies, 2018

First published in Great Britain in 2018

by

Institute of Islamic Studies

140 Maida Vale, London W9 1QB

Tel: (44) 0207 604 5500; Fax: (44) 0207 604 4898

Email: icel@ic-el.com

Content

Introduction	7
Embarking on the spiritual journey	13
The greater pleasure	16
Characteristics of the spiritual journey	26
Love is the fast track	31
How to acquire love for God	45
I. Reflecting on how much He loves us	47
II. Reflecting on God's blessings	69
Our existence	70
Sustenance	76
Making the world convenient for our life	77
Guidance	79
Opening the gate of repentance	85
III. Asking God Himself	97
IV. Remembrance (mindfulness of God)	103
V. Loving God's people	113
The pleasure of God in loving His creatures	113
Loving people is a Godly act	117
Loving others in the conduct of the Prophet (s)	135
How to practice love in our life	145
Bibliography	147

Introduction

I am sure you have a beautiful reason for picking up this book. Maybe you are passionate about spirituality and want to read more. Maybe you love God and are interested to know what a book about love and spirituality has to say. Either way, I am happy you are here, and before we start, I want to tell you why I wrote this book.

Love has always been an important part of my life. God first introduced me to love through one of His agents, my mother. I am a mother myself and have no doubt that all mothers love their children. But some mothers are different. Their love is unbelievable, and my mother is one of them. She has the biggest heart and the most loving soul. From the very beginning of my life, I was blessed to taste the sweetness and pleasure of a selfless love.

Little did I know that I was going to experience a whole new level of love in few years. When I was only 16 years old, I had a breath-taking experience. I felt a flame of God's love in my heart. I had tasted love before from my family and especially my mother, but this was different. This love was overwhelming. In no time, it took over my whole existence.

It is difficult to articulate even now. But back then it was even harder for me to understand what this experience was.

For that reason, I spoke with a spiritual guide about my experience who then told me about the "path of love" and told me "if you want to have a permanent presence of love for God in your heart, open your heart and love all His people". And that is how it all began for me.

This experience gave a new spirit to my life. I was so overwhelmed by knowing God and getting close to Him that I felt that I would no longer be able to continue my ordinary life. Despite all the plans that my parents and I had previously made for me, I decided to start a completely new life. I devoted my life to deepening my knowledge of Islam and, more importantly, to drawing closer to God. Although I feel I could have done more on this path, I am sure that I chose the best path for my life, the path of love.

Years after that, I got married to an amazing man, and as fate had it, we moved to England. During our time in England, by the plan of God we encountered the Focolare movement. It was an incredible experience. Knowing people in another part of the world, from another tradition, who are talking and practicing the same thing: love for God and for one another. Now I had found others who believed in and followed the same way, the path of love.

As a result of this friendship, I decided to write my MA dissertation on "Love in Christianity and Islam."[1] The experience of knowing about the Focolare movement also opened a gate for us to start a dialogue of love with Christians from different denominations, a dialogue that has led to many intimate friendships. I feel very blessed and fortunate to have had this opportunity to practice the act of loving God's people, both Muslims and followers of other traditions.

To quench my thirst and in order to have a better understanding of God's love, I chose "*Raḥmah* (Love) in the Qur'anic Theology and Islamic Value System" as the topic for my PhD thesis. I spent several joyful years studying the Qur'an, reflecting on the verses of the Qur'an, and reading different exegeses of the Qur'an as well as collections of hadith and books related to this topic. On each issue, I looked at tens of different books of exegesis to find the best interpretation of the related verses. During this time, I also taught parts of my research in workshops. I also delivered lectures on this topic in different countries such as Kenya, Canada (Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Waterloo), and Germany. I also spoke about this in Iran, in the Islamic seminary of Qom where my own journey began.

---

[1] It was published by New City a Christian publisher run by the Focolare movement.

What I found as result of my research was amazing and added to my understanding of God's love and intensified my yearning for getting closer to Him. Throughout my life, this understanding of God who is love and caring has given meaning to my life; it has given me hope, courage, and peace during the most difficult times of my life.

Thus, I decided to share the results of my research and personal experiences with others. I hope it can help the readers to connect to God or strengthen their connection if they already have one so that they can taste and enjoy the sweetness of love of God and its outcomes which are peace, tranquillity, and strength during the suffering and hardships of life.

The whole content of this book is based on verses, hadiths, and profound theological and spiritual teachings, but I tried to write it in a simple way so that everyone could relate to the message behind it.

There were many hadiths and verses to choose from and they were all beautiful and amazing. I still tried to include as many hadiths and verses as I could, but these are only a sample of the many sayings, hadiths, prayers, and verses that exist on this topic.

In my view, it is possible to summarise the core of Islamic spirituality in two points: first to be attentive and mindful of God whole-heartedly while establishing a close relation with

Him based on love; and, second, loving and serving His people.

If everyone practices these two points, it will lead us to a world full of love, happiness, and peace.

At the end I would like to thank my family that supported me in different ways. My respected husband Dr. Shaikh Shomali, despite his busy schedule, took the time to read the book and offer his valuable comments. My older son, Mohammad Reza designed the cover with the help of my daughter, Masoumeh. My daughter in law, Zahraa, read the book and gave her feedback and my younger son, Shaikh Mohammad Javad, encouraged me to write this book. I would also like to thank Dr Amina Inloes for editing this book.

Last but not the least, I thank God who gifted me this understanding and showed me the path of love. I pray to God to bless those teachers who guided me through my journey with their knowledge and wisdom.

Mahnaz Heydarpour

22 November 2018

Embarking on the spiritual journey

There are moments in life that can be turning points for us, if we do not ignore them. These are the times when we feel that we are in need of something greater than all the pleasures of this world, when we feel that whatever the world has to offer still does not satisfy the need in us for something transcendental.

It may happen when we are at the peak of achievement in our worldly lives yet still feel unsatisfied. Instead, we may feel that we are in need of a pleasure beyond worldly pleasures.

Or it may happen after we lose someone whom we loved dearly and depended upon. We may feel lonely, broken, insecure and in need of a permanent source of love to fill the void, something we can rely on to get peace and security.

Or it may happen when we are leading a normal life, nothing special, but read a book or hear a lecture which inspires us to look beyond the appearance of this material world, to look for a purpose and a goal in our lives which is much greater and more valuable than what we are already aware of, something that gives a real and deep meaning to our lives.

No matter what creates this awareness in us, one thing we know for sure is that it happens to every single one of us. If it has not happened yet, it soon will. The Prophet Muhammad (s) has informed us and, in a sense, promised us that in every person's life there will be moments when they sense God's presence and wake up to the realization that there is more to life.[1]

These moments open a window for us to see a reality beyond what we see with our physical eyes, to show that material reality is just a sign to lead us to something deeper. The material world exists to help us understand the purpose of our creation and the goal we should have in life. This is why God asks us not to just see and pass by but to reflect on His creation and wonders of this world:

> وَ اخْتِلافِ اَلَّيْلِ وَ النَّهارِ وَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن رِّزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَ تَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ
>
> And in the alternation of night and day and what God sends down from the sky of] His [provision with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the changing of the winds

---

[1] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad Muḥsin, *al-Wāfī*, vol. 1, p, 552. The original text is as follows:

> إن لربكم فى أيام دهركم نفحات ألا فتعرضوا لها
>
> In your time from your Lord there are winds (or breezes, *nafaḥāt*), so benefit from them.

there are signs for a people who apply reason
(Qur'an 45:5)

We are not brought to this world to just enjoy ourselves. If that is how we see the world, if the only purpose in our life is to seek worldly pleasure, then as soon as we are challenged by calamities and suffering, we will feel like we have lost our reason to live; we will lose hope and fall into misery. But the pleasures of this world are not what we are here for. For even at their best, the maximum pleasure in this world is miniscule. The Qur'an says:

قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَى

Say, "The enjoyment of this world is little and the Hereafter is better for the God-wary."
(Qur'an 4:77)

Many religiously-minded people already feel that life is more than material pleasures, and that one should patiently endure suffering in order to gain a comfortable and peaceful life in the hereafter. However, there is more to it than that. Many people stop at this point and think that the blessings of heaven are the highest the human being can achieve. But that is not the case. There is a reality even higher and greater than this – a pleasure that we do not have to wait for until after death and the hereafter to enjoy; rather, we can experience it in this world.

The greater pleasure

The following verse of the Qur'an refers to this fact and introduces the greater pleasure:

> وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَ مَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِى جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ
>
> God has promised the believers, male and female, gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, beauteous places in the Gardens of Eden – and God's pleasure is greater [than all these]. That is the great success! (Qur'an 9:72)

God's pleasure is the maximum achievement that we can attain in our lives. It makes our lives meaningful. It should be our main goal; all other goals should be directed in such a way that they help us achieve this main one.

Some might object that we were first discussing a greater pleasure for human beings, but now the discussion has switched to God's pleasure. So, let me clarify. First, God is not like a tyrant king who needs our services or whom we must obey out of fear in order to please. Rather He is like a kind, caring, and wise father that guides us towards our growth and happiness. He is pleased when He sees that we are growing and nearing our own happiness. Therefore, when

we see the result of following His instructions, we also will be pleased. Referring to a true servant, God says in the Qur'an:

يَاأَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَ ادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing. Then enter among My servants and enter My paradise! (Qur'an 89:27-30)

As we see in this verse when we try to please God, in addition to being pleased, we will attain a heart full of peace and tranquillity.

In truth, this is a journey on the path of peace:

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَ يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَ يَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

With it [the Qur'an], God guides those who follow [the way of] His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path. (Qur'an 5:16)

This is because this journey is towards God who is the source of peace:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ

God is He, other than Whom there is no other god: the Sovereign, the Holy, the source of Peace. (Qur'an 59:23)

A beautiful point here is that all this pleasure and peace is achievable when we establish a close relationship with God. As soon as this relationship starts, peace and joy enter our hearts, and the stronger this relationship becomes, the more we will experience this joy and peace.

This joy and peace initiated by the close relationship to God are what I referred to as something more enjoyable than all the worldly pleasures. When this connection is there, then no suffering can make us hopeless or desperate. Then even during the most difficult calamities, we will have peace in our hearts. Indeed, in any challenge that we face, no matter how great, what makes us suffer the most is losing our peace and tranquillity. The best example is what Lady Zainab (a) said after she lost many of her loved ones, including Imam Husain (a), in one day and then was taken captive along with Imam Sajjad (a) and the remaining women and children. She experienced immense pain and suffering but said "I saw nothing except beauty,"[1] for she could see beyond the scene of Karbala; she could see the reality of the world and had a deep connection with God.

The first stage of the journey: the point of departure

Coming to know this fact means that we are at the departure point for our spiritual journey towards God. Of course, this does not mean that those who have not started this journey

---

[1] Ibn Namā al-Hillī, Ja'far b. Muhammad, *Muthīr al-Aḥzān*, p. 90.

do not believe in God. There may be many believers in God who are committed to performing acts of worship as a matter of habit, but have not yet experienced and are not aware of the pleasure of having a close relationship with God. That is why mystics call this stage of the journey "wakefulness" (*yaqẓah*). As the Prophet (s) said, some people are asleep all their lives and only wake up when they die.[1]

Thus, the departure point is this awareness and wakefulness, and the destination is closeness to God and filling the heart with His presence.

Of course, when we talk about getting close to God it does not mean that He is not already close to us. He is nearer to us than our jugular vein:

وَ نحنُ أقْرَبُ إلَيْه منْ حَبْلِ الْوَريد

And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (Qur'an 50:16)

We also read in the Qur'an:

وَ اعْلَمُواْ أنَّ اللّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَ قَلْبِه

Know that God intervenes between a person and his heart. (Qur'an 8:24)

---

[1] Warrām Ibn Abī Farās, *Majmū'ah Warrām*, vol. 1, p. 150. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

النّاس نيام حتّى إذا ماتوا إنتبهوا

People are asleep; when they die, they become alert.

He is with us wherever we are:

وَ هُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ

> He is with you wherever you may be. (Qur'an 57:4)

God is close to us, but we are the ones that should elevate ourselves and seek nearness to Him. Also, as is obvious, we do not mean physical nearness but rather spiritual and existential nearness, because God is not limited to any place or space. In physical nearness, both parties are either near each other or far from each other, but in intellectual or spiritual relations, it is possible for one party to be close to the other but not vice versa, like a teacher who might be very close his students but whose students might be away from him, and this is why he understands them but not the other way around necessarily.

The second stage of the journey: self-knowledge

When we become aware that there is more to this world and we want to experience that, it becomes time for the next step of our spiritual journey, self-knowledge. We should try to understand ourselves and discover our potential and our capacity for perfection. In a divine (*qudsī*)[1] hadith, God says:

---

[1] *Qudsī* hadiths are those which relate the word of God given to prophets through means other than scriptures.

لايَسَعُنِى أَرْضِى وَ لاسَمَائِى وَ لَكِنْ يَسَعُنِى قَلْبُ عَبْدِى الْمُؤْمِن

Neither my heaven nor my earth could contain Me, but it is the heart of My believing servant that can contain Me.[1]

What a delight it is that our heart can be a place for the presence of God! All creatures are important, but human beings have been given special status. God says:

وَ لَقَدْ كَرَّمْنا بَنِى آدَمَ وَ حَمَلْناهُمْ فِى الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ وَ رَزَقْناهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّباتِ وَ فَضَّلْناهُمْ عَلى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنا تَفْضِيلاً

Certainly, we have honoured the Children of Adam, and carried them over land and sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them an advantage over many of those We have created with a complete preference. (Qur'an 17:70)

This is the opportunity which we have been given. It is up to us to choose the worldly pleasure, which is little, or else to choose blessings in the Hereafter which are better[2] – or the best and greatest blessing which is proximity to God, the Giver of all blessings, and encountering our Lord, the Creator of the universe.

---

[1] Ibn Abī Jumhūr, Muhammad, *Awālī al-La'ālī al-'Azīzīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Dīnīyyah,* vol. 4, p. 7.

[2] Say, "The enjoyment of this world is little and the Hereafter is better for the God-wary." (Qur'an 4:77)

The third stage of the journey: self-care

The next step after self-knowledge is self-care. Now that we know to what extent we can grow existentially and spirituality, we must take care of ourselves. The following things must be considered in this stage.

Appropriate beliefs

First, we should examine our main beliefs. Is what we believe only dogma on our tongue which we have memorized from childhood, or do we really understand our beliefs; can we rationally argue for them? That is still not enough; our beliefs should settle in our hearts and be applied in our daily lives.

For example, if we say we believe in the unity of God (*tawḥīd*), we should know that for being a true monotheist (*muwaḥḥid*), it is not enough to be able to prove the unity of God with rational arguments. Rather, it is necessary to understand it deeply in our hearts and let it direct our lives, actions and emotions. We need to know how it can affect our daily lives.

Performing acts of piety and refraining from wrong deeds

Sincerity is also very important on this journey. We cannot say we want to grow spiritually and move closer to God while our actions contradict our claim. Therefore, we should avoid any wrong or forbidden deeds and commit ourselves to good ones, including rituals, acts of worship and moral behaviours. In addition, a good intention can change ordinary actions to

spiritual ones. For example, if we eat to get energy and sleep with the intention of refreshing ourselves so that we can serve people, then even our eating and sleeping themselves will be turned into good deeds. Or even sometimes in conversation by being silent and letting the other party speak more so that they feel good, we are turning our silence into a good deed. A beautiful hadith says:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَخْلَصَ لِلَّهِ عَمَلَهُ وَعِلْمَهُ وَ حُبَّهُ وَ بُغْضَهُ وَ أَخْذَهُ وَ تَرْكَهُ وَ كَلَامَهُ وَ صَمْتَهُ

> Blessed be those who purify [for the sake of God] their action, knowledge, love, dislike, taking, leaving aside, speech and silence.[1]

When we try to do everything for the sake of God, then automatically wrong actions will be avoided. In this way, each moment of our life, whether we are awake or sleeping, whether we are talking or silent, we will be moving forward.

In fact, if we are firm in our beliefs, we will do good actions very easily and there would be no need to force ourselves into doing them specially with respect to dos and don'ts. If we understand God's attributes – like, for example, the One, all Wise, all-Knowing, Loving, Benevolent, and Rich wholeheartedly, then we will realise that the One who has created us has complete knowledge about us and knows the

---

[1] Ibn Shu'bah Harrānī, Ḥasan, *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 91.

best way for us to live well in this world and how to go towards our happiness. Therefore, out of His love and benevolence, He has given us some instructions.

Purifying and decorating the heart

The third requirement of this stage is removing bad qualities from our hearts and acquiring good ones. The heart will become a place for the presence of God, so it is necessary to clean and decorate it. A sound heart (*qalb-i salīm*) is the most important part of success on the spiritual journey. The Qur'an says:

يَوْمَ لاَيَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَ لاَبَنُونَ إِلا مَنْ أَتىَ اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

> The day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to God with a sound heart. (Qur'an 26:88-89)

When a heart is completely cleaned and purified, it is a heart empty of grudges, hatred, jealousy, or anything that does not have a divine fragrance. This way we will have a heart ready to host the divine. Commenting on this verse, a hadith says:

اَلْقَلْبُ السَّلِيمُ الَّذِى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ وَ لَيْسَ فِيهِ أَحَدٌ سِوَاه

> The pure heart is the one that meets its Lord while it is free from anyone else.[1]

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 16.

All of us human beings will encounter God, the Lord of the universe, after the transition to the other world, but it is possible for a purified heart to meet Him even in this world. Once Imam Ali (a) was asked: "Have you seen your Lord that you worship?" He replied: "I do not worship a Lord that I do not see." Then the Imam (a) added: "Beware, the eyes do not see Him by way of sight, but rather, the hearts see Him through the realities of faith."[1]

We can be among those people who see God with the vision of their heart in different conditions of life, during the day and night.[2]

---

[1] Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 98. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِی عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ: جَاءَ حِبْرٌ إِلَى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ فَقَالَ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ رَبَّكَ حِينَ عَبَدْتَهُ. قَالَ: فَقَالَ: وَيْلَكَ مَا كُنْتُ أَعْبُدُ رَبّاً لَمْ أَرَهُ. قَالَ: وَ كَيْفَ رَأَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَ: وَيْلَكَ لاتُدْرِكُهُ الْعُيُونُ فِی مُشَاهَدَةِ الأَبْصَارِ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَتْهُ الْقُلُوبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الإِيمَانِ.

[2] Fayd Kāshānī, Muhammad, *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā' fī Tahdhīb al-Aḥyā',* vol. 8, p. 35. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

التحقيق أنّه لا فرق فی الرؤية بين الدّنيا و الآخرة فكما أنّه لا يجوز رؤيته سبحانه فی الدّنيا بالعين و البصر فكذلک لا يجوز رؤيته فی الآخرة بالعين و البصر، و كما أنّه يجوز رؤيته فی الآخرة بالقلب و البصيرة لأهل البصائر أعنی غاية الانكشاف و الوضوح بحيث يتأدّى إلى المشاهدة و اللّقاء كذلک يجوز رؤيته فی الدّنيا بهذا المعنى و الحجاب بينه و بين خلقه ليس إلا الجهل و قلّة المعرفة دون البدن، فإنّ أولياء اللّه يشاهدونه فی الدّنيا فی جميع أحوالهم و متصرّفاتهم ليلهم و نهارهم.

Characteristics of the spiritual journey

Now that we have a general account of the departure point and later steps – namely, self-knowledge and self-care – I will now discuss some other characteristics of this spiritual journey.

What we need

Guidance. To find and remain on the right path, we need guidance. The intellect, the *fiṭrah*,[1] prophets, and divine books are general guidance available for everyone, but if we are appreciative and put forth our utmost effort, we will be provided with special guidance. Several verses of the Qur'an refer to this special guidance. For example, we read in the Qur'an:

> فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ بِاللَّهِ وَ اعْتَصَمُواْ بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَ فَضْلٍ وَ يَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا
>
> As for those who have faith in God, and hold fast to Him, He will admit them to His mercy and grace, and He will guide them on a straight path to Him. (Qur'an 4:174)

---

[1] *Fiṭrah* refers to the distinctive spiritual capacity embedded by God in human creation that sets human beings apart from other animals and inclines them to seek perfection and virtue. All human beings possess this common human element, and so they are all predisposed to strive for perfection and truth. Shomali, Muhammad Ali, *Islamic Belief System*, p. 18.

Receiving this special guidance is guaranteed. If we are sincere and do our best on His way then surely, God will guide us further:

وَالَّذِينَ جاهَدُوا فِينا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنا

As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways. (Qur'an 29:69)

Provisions. Like any journey in this world, this spiritual journey also requires prvisions. For an ordinary journey, depending on the distance of the destination and number of days we want to spend traveling and staying at each stop or at the destination, we need money to buy things such as tickets, fuel, and food. On this spiritual journey, the provision is our sincere good deeds.

Persistence. As I will explain later, the journey before us is very long and there are many challenges on the way, but the goal is priceless. We need to be persistent and consistent. The Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقامُوا فَلا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Indeed, those who say, "Our Lord is God," and then remain steadfast will have no fear, nor will they grieve. (Qur'an 46:13)

Also a prayer reads:

قَدْ عَلِمْتُ أَنَّ أَفْضَلَ زَادِ الرَّاحِلِ إِلَيْكَ عَزْمُ إِرَادَةٍ يَخْتَارُكَ بِهَا

I know for sure that the best provision for the one who intends to travel to You is true and strong willpower by which he chooses You.[1]

Therefore, we should not let anything disturb us, nor should we let any failure disappoint us.

The stations

There are many stations on the way to the destination. We may not reach the last station, but this does not mean that we have not achieved anything. What matters the most is that we do our best. As long as we are on the way, we will enjoy the trip, and it will be appreciated. In a *qudsī* hadith God says:

بِعَيْنِي مَا يَتَحَمَّلُونَ مِنْ أَجْلِي وَ بِسَمْعِي مَا يَشْكُونَ مِنْ حُبِّي

It is not hidden from my sight what they endure for My sake and I hear the complain they make out of My love.[2]

According to a beautiful story, one day an ant picked up a large grain and walked in the wilderness. The ant was asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I want to take this grain

---

[1] Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali b. Mūsā, *al-Iqbāl bi al-A'māl al-Ḥasanah*, vol. 3, p. 277, supplication of month of Rajab by Imam Kaẓim (a).

[2] Shahīd Thānī, Zayn al-Dīn b. Ali, *Musakkin al-Fu'ād*, p. 19.

to my beloved friend who is in another city." He was told, "It seems impossible for you to go all that way and cross the mountains to see him." The ant said, "It does not matter. As long as I am on this path, he understands that I love him."

Destination and duration

Our aim is to reach or meet God. God is perfect, absolute, and infinite and this means that the distance of this journey is infinite. On the other hand, the time that we have is our lifetime which is very limited, even if we live long. However, the reality is that we cannot even be certain of the next day or the one after. Considering the infinity of the distance and limitation of the time, we may think that it is impossible to achieve success on this journey.

This difficulty is something we have all experienced. We feel like no matter how hard we try we are still far from where we should be. We feel like there is still so much left of the journey to get close to God. But we have to remember this journey has been planned by a just and wise God. So what is the secret? Why would a just God plan a journey that seems so be impossible to undertake? Well, there is a secret. The answer is love. Love is what makes this impossible journey possible – not just that, but also short and the sweetest experience that we can have in life.

Love is the fast track

When we sincerely embark on the journey towards God and make efforts, God will help us in different ways.

يَا مَنْ إِذَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ عَبْدٌ قَرَّبَهُ وَ أَدْنَاه

O He who when a servant approaches Him brings him near and close.[1]

However, for this long journey there is a fast track line which gives us so much energy that we become tireless and at the same time makes the journey full of joy and pleasure. And that is the path of love.

مَا أَطْيَبَ طَعْمَ حُبِّكَ، وَمَا أَعْذَبَ شُرْبَ قُرْبِكَ

How pleasant is the taste of your love, and how delightful is the drink of your nearness![2]

When we love someone deeply, it empowers us to do everything that makes our beloved happy, and we do it out of joy.

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* 'The Whispered Prayer of the Hopeful' (*Munājāt al-Rājīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 408.

[2] Ibid., 'The Whispered Prayer of the Knowers' *(Munajāt al-'Ārifīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 415.

إِلَهِي هَبْ لِي قَلْباً يُدْنِيهِ مِنْكَ شَوْقُهُ

O my God, (please) grant me a heart whose longing for You will bring it near You.[1]

If we sow the seed of love for God in our hearts and help it grow, then instead of walking towards God, we can jump or even fly out of eagerness and delight.

How love for God helps us

In discussing the third stage of the spiritual journey, I highlighted the importance of purification of the heart from vicious traits of character. Since the root of all evil is excessive love for the material world *(dunyā),*[2] when love for God dwells in one's heart, love for the *dunyā* disappears, and this in turn burns all vicious qualities. In a hadith we read:

حُبُّ اللَّهِ نَارٌ لاتَمُرُّ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إلا احْتَرَقَ

Love for God does not pass anything without burning it.[3]

In the third stage I referred to performing good actions and avoiding wrong ones as primary requirements of this journey. Reflecting on how motherly love works can help us better

---

[1] Ibid., The Invocation of the Month of Sha'bān by Imam Ali (a), p. 49.

[2] Imam Sādiq (a) [attributed to], *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'ah*, p. 138. The Arabic text is as follows:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ

[3] Ibid., Imam Ali (a), p. 192.

understand how love for God can help us. A mother's love for her children is so powerful that it makes her willing to sacrifice her comfort or even her health or life for her children and work for the children tirelessly but joyfully and happily.

When love for God resides in the heart, it gives us so much motivation, energy, and power that we become willing to do our best in order to please God. At the same time, tasting the joy of God's love makes us fearful not to lose our beautiful relationship with Him or displease Him by making any mistake, let alone disobeying Him by committing sins. As the whispered prayer of the month of Sha'bān says:

إِلٰهِی لَمْ یَکُنْ لِی حَوْلٌ فَأَنْتَقِلَ بِهِ عَنْ مَعْصِیَتِکَ إِلا فِی وَقْتٍ أَیْقَظْتَنِی لِمَحَبَّتِکَ

> O my God, I had no strength by which I could rid myself of the acts of disobedience to You except after You awakened me to Your love.[1]

Love is the sole way

Love is not only the fastest way to traverse our spiritual journey, but it might be argued that love is the only thing on which our relationship with God should be based. It is not an exaggeration to say that the reality beyond the whole creation of mankind is based on mutual love between God and His

---

[1] Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali, *Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl*, vol. 2, p. 686.

people. In the fifth chapter of the Qur'an, there is a reference to the people that God is happy with:

يحبهم و يحبونه

He loves them, and they love Him. (Qur'an 5:54)

The Qur'an mentions ardent love for God as the characteristic of the believers:

الذين ءامنوا أشد حبا لله

The faithful have a more ardent love for God. (Qur'an 2:165)

We also read in a hadith from the Prophet (s) that in response to a question about the meaning of faith, he said:

أن يكون الله و رسوله أحب إليك مما سواهما

To love God and His messenger more than anything else.[1]

When someone believes in God and has a proper understanding and knowledge of Him, automatically love for God enters his heart because God is the source of beauty and perfection, as we read in a hadith quoted from Imam Ḥasan (a):

---

[1] Warrām Ibn Abī Farās, *Majmū'ah Warrām*, vol. 1, p. 223.

مَنْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ أَحَبَّه

Whoever knows God will love Him.[1]

God is the first to love

The important point is that this love is mutual and, more than that, He is the first to love us. Our love for Him is our response to His love for us. God loves all of us, but specifically He mentions the traits that he likes and dislikes. The phrases "God loves" and "God does not love" followed by a good or bad characteristic or action of human beings are repeated throughout the Qur'an to show which characteristics or acts God loves or dislikes. For example, when God says, "Indeed God loves the just" (Qur'an 5:42), this does not mean that He completely loves anyone who is just even if there is some bad aspect in them. On the other hand, when He says that He "does not like the wasteful" (Qur'an 7:31), this does not mean that there is nothing in a wasteful person that God loves. It only means that God does not love that quality in them. Otherwise, no one is excluded from God's love.

The pick of this mutual love

Going back to our discussion about the need to speed up in our spiritual journey, we mentioned that love for God helps us embark on spiritual journey and proceed swiftly. The more our heart is purified, the more this love intensifies since there

---

[1] Warrām Ibn Abī Farās, *Majmū'ah Warrām*, vol. 1, p. 52.

is a mutual relationship between purification of the heart and God's love. When the heart is completely purified and cleansed, this mutual love rises very high and becomes special.

From our side, this happens because in a purified heart He is the only beloved and there is no interest in anything other than Him. This is the time that all our actions, hearts, and beings are dedicated to Him and His pleasure.

From His side, love becomes special because now there is no bad aspect in our being, no bad characteristic and no bad action, and this is the time that He loves us totally and without any reservation. This is the kind of love that God refers to in the following hadith:

مَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ وَ إِنَّهُ لَيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَ بَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَ لِسَانَهُ الَّذِي يَنْطِقُ بِهِ وَ يَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا إِنْ دَعَانِي أَجَبْتُهُ وَ إِنْ سَأَلَنِي أَعْطَيْتُهُ

None of My servants can seek proximity to Me by that which is dearer to Me than things that I have made obligatory on him. Then, with the performance of *nawāfil* (recommended acts), he continuously attains proximity to Me, so that I love him. When I love him, I will be the ear with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, and the hand with which he strikes. If

he calls Me, I will answer his call, and if he makes a request, I will grant it.[1]

This servant of God is included among those who are called "those near to God" (*muqarrabūn*):

وَ السَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ أُولَئِکَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ

And the foremost are the foremost. These will be those Nearest to God. (Qur'an 56:9-10)

For these people, many blessings in heaven are promised,[2] but none of the blessings of heaven are comparable to the incredible and indescribable joy and pleasure of being so close to God that He tells them His secrets and whispers to them day and night:

فَإِذَا أَحبَبتُهُ وَ أَفتَحُ عَينَ قَلبِهِ إِلَى جَلالِی فَلا أُخفِی عَلَيهِ خَاصَّةَ خَلقِی فَأُنَاجِيهِ فِی ظُلَمِ اللَّيلِ وَ نُورِ النَّهَارِ...وَأُسمِعُهُ كَلامِی وَ كَلامَ مَلائِكَتِی وَ أُعَرِّفُهُ السِّرَّ الَّذِی سَتَرتُهُ عَنْ خَلقِی

I will love them when they love Me. And I will open their inner eyes to My Glory and Grandeur and I will not hide from them [the knowledge of] the select of My creation. In the darkness of night and the light of day, I will talk to them secretly... I will make them hear My words and the words of My angels. And I will

---

[1] Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 352.

[2] For example, see Qur'an 56:11-26.

reveal to them the secret I have hidden from My creation.[1]

There is no greater honour or pleasure for a servant than being loved by his Lord to this extent, such that God talks to him as His close friend and lover. We read in the Qur'an regarding Prophet Abraham:

وَ اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْراهيمَ خَليلا

And God took Abraham for a dedicated friend. (Qur'an 4:125)

It has been narrated that when the Angel of Death went to take the soul of Prophet Abraham, he asked the Angel:

هَلْ رَأَيْتَ خَليلا يُميتُ خَليلَه

Have you seen a friend makes his friend die?

Then the Angel conveyed Abraham's question to God. God told the Angel to go back to Abraham and tell him:

هَلْ رَأَيْتَ حَبيباً يَكْرَهُ لِقاءَ حَبيبِه

Have you seen a lover that does not like to meet his beloved?

Then the Prophet Abraham told the Angel of Death to take his soul.[2] There is story about Prophet Abraham's life which

---

[1] Daylamī, Ḥasan, *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb*, vol. 1, p. 204.

[2] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Amālī li al-Ṣadūq*, p. 197. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

shows his intense love for God. It has been narrated that Prophet Abraham possessed a herd of thousands of sheep. When God chose him as His friend, the angels said that Prophet Abraham's love for God was because of the fact that God had given him so much wealth and blessings. God wanted to show the angels the sincerity of Prophet Abraham's love for God, so He told the angels to choose two of their best among themselves. They chose Gabriel and Michael. They came down to earth in the form of human beings when Prophet Abraham was with his herd. They glorified God with a very beautiful voice:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّ الْمَلائكة وَالرُّوح

He is the most Glorified, the most Holy, the Lord of angels and the spirit.

Hearing name of his beloved and His glorification, Prophet Abraham became so overjoyed and excited that told them

---

أمير الْمُؤْمنين (ع) قَالَ: لَمَّا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى قَبْضَ رُوحِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (ع) أَهْبَطَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ: السَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ قَالَ: وَ عَلَيْكَ السَّلامُ يَا مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ أَ دَاعٍ أَمْ نَاعٍ قَالَ: بَلْ دَاعٍ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَأَجِبْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ (ع): فَهَلْ رَأَيْتَ خَلِيلا يُمِيتُ خَلِيلَهُ قَالَ: فَرَجَعَ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ حَتَّى وَقَفَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ جَلَّ جَلالُهُ فَقَالَ: إِلَهِي قَدْ سَمِعْتَ مَا قَالَ خَلِيلُكَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَقَالَ: اللَّهُ جَلَّ جَلالُهُ يَا مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ اذْهَبْ إِلَيْهِ وَ قُلْ لَهُ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ حَبِيباً يَكْرَهُ لِقَاءَ حَبِيبِهِ إِنَّ الْحَبِيبَ يُحِبُّ لِقَاءَ حَبِيبِهِ.

"recite it again and I will give you half of my wealth." Then again said to them "recite it again and I give all what I have."[1]

There are also many examples in the prayers of Ahl al-Bayt (a) that shows how they talked to God out of their eagerness and passion for Him. For example, we read in the Whispered Prayer of the Devotees:

فَقَدِ انْقَطَعَتْ إِلَيْكَ هِمَّتِي وَ انْصَرَفَتْ نَحْوَكَ رَغْبَتِي فَأَنْتَ لَا غَيْرُكَ مُرَادِي وَ لَكَ لَا لِسِوَاكَ سَهَرِي وَ سُهَادِي وَ لِقَاؤُكَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي وَ وَصْلُكَ مُنَى نَفْسِي وَ إِلَيْكَ شَوْقِي وَ فِي مَحَبَّتِكَ وَلَهِي وَ إِلَى هَوَاكَ صَبَابَتِي وَ رِضَاكَ بُغْيَتِي وَ رُؤْيَتُكَ حَاجَتِي وَ جِوَارُكَ طَلِبَتِي وَ قُرْبُكَ غَايَةُ سُؤْلِي وَ فِي مُنَاجَاتِكَ رَوْحِي وَ رَاحَتِي وَ عِنْدَكَ دَوَاءُ عِلَّتِي وَ شِفَاءُ غُلَّتِي وَ بَرْدُ لَوْعَتِي وَ كَشْفُ كُرْبَتِي

My aspiration has been cut off from everything but You, and my desire has turned toward You alone. You are my object, none other; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness. Meeting You is the gladness of my eye; joining You is the wish of my soul. Toward You is my yearning, in love for You my passionate longing, in inclining toward You my fervent craving. Your good pleasure is the aim I seek, vision of You is my need, Your neighbourhood my request, nearness to You the utmost object

[1] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad Muḥsin, *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī,* vol. 1, p. 505; Narāqī, Aḥmad, *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādah*, vol. 1, p. 748.

of my asking. In whispered prayer to You I find my repose and my ease. With You lies the remedy of my illness, the cure for my burning thirst, the coolness of my ardour, the removal of my distress.[1]

In another whispered prayer, the Imam (a) says to God:

غُلَّتِی لاَ یُبَرِّدُهَا إِلاَّ وَصْلُکَ وَ لَوْعَتِی لاَ یُطْفِیهَا إِلاَّ لِقَاؤُکَ وَ شَوْقِی إِلَیْکَ لاَ یَبُلُّهُ إِلاَّ النَّظَرُ إِلَی وَجْهِکَ وَ قَرَارِی لاَ یَقَرُّ دُونَ دُنُوِّی مِنْکَ

My God, nothing will cool my burning thirst but reaching You, nothing will quench my ardour but meeting You, nothing will calm my yearning but gazing upon Your face, nothing will settle me without closeness to You.[2]

These are just a few examples of the many hadiths and texts that show that we can achieve the maximum success on the spiritual journey if it is based on love for God.

More than that, it gives us strength and courage to contend with depression and desperation in our worldly lives. Many of us are struggling with and suffering due to challenges and calamities that occur in our lives, whether they be illness,

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* 'The Whispered Prayer of the Devotees' (*Munājāt al-Murīdīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 412.

[2] Ibid., 'The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly Poor' (*Munājāt al-Muftaqirīn*), p. 414.

losing our beloved ones, loneliness, failure in marriage, problems with work, problems with education, and so on. Remembering God as the source of power helps us and brings tranquillity to our hearts. But remembering God who is love and loves us so ardently adds to the pleasure of His remembrance. Love is sweet, and its sweetness in the middle of the pain and bitterness of suffering brings us joy.

More than that, when our love for God increases and He becomes the only beloved in our hearts, then the pleasure of His presence in our hearts overcomes the pain caused by the lack of any other pleasure. That is how the prophets and Ahl al-Bayt (a) survived after all the tragedies and calamities that they experienced in their life. We read in one of their supplications:

إِلٰهِی مَنْ ذَا الَّذِی ذَاقَ حَلَاوَةَ مَحَبَّتِکَ فَرَامَ مِنْکَ بَدَلًا، وَ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِی أَنِسَ بِقُرْبِکَ فَابْتَغَی عَنْکَ حِوَلًا

> My God, who can taste the sweetness of Your love, then want another in place of You? Who can become intimate with Your nearness, then seek removal from You?[1]

Someone who does not embark on the path of love has missed a great deal in his life.

---

[1] Ibid., The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers (*Munājāt al-Muhibbīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 412.

خَسِرَتْ صَفْقَةُ عَبْدٍ لَمْ تَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ حُبِّكَ نَصِيباً

A servant whom You have not granted a portion of your love loses in his trade.[1]

An invitation from God to all of us

The life-changing experience of loving God is not out of reach for us. It is not only for a specific group of people; rather, He has sent the invitation to all of us. If we sincerely look for it and do our best, we will achieve it as God has promised. In what follows, I refer to one of His invitation messages that He has sent to all of His people on the earth. In a *qudsī* hadith, God says to Prophet David:

يَا دَاوُدُ أَبْلِغْ أَهْلَ أَرْضِي أَنِّي حَبِيبُ مَنْ أَحَبَّنِي وَ جَلِيسُ مَنْ جَالَسَنِي وَ مُؤْنِسٌ لِمَنْ آنَسَ بِذِكْرِي وَ صَاحِبٌ لِمَنْ صَاحَبَنِي وَ مُخْتَارٌ لِمَنِ اخْتَارَنِي وَ مُطِيعٌ لِمَنْ أَطَاعَنِي مَا أَحَبَّنِي أَحَدٌ أَعْلَمُ ذَلِكَ يَقِيناً مِنْ قَلْبِهِ إِلَّا قَبِلْتُهُ لِنَفْسِي وَ أَحْبَبْتُهُ حَيَاةً لَا يَتَقَدَّمُهُ أَحَدٌ مِنْ خَلْقِي. مَنْ طَلَبَنِي بِالْحَقِّ وَجَدَنِي وَ مَنْ طَلَبَ غَيْرِي لَمْ يَجِدْنِي. فَارْفُضُوا يَا أَهْلَ الْأَرْضِ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ غُرُورِهَا وَ هَلُمُّوا إِلَى كَرَامَتِي وَ مُصَاحَبَتِي وَ مُجَالَسَتِي وَ مُؤَانَسَتِي وَ آنِسُوا بِي أُوَانِسْكُمْ وَ أُسَارِعْ إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكُمْ

Carry this message to those who live on My earth: I love those who love Me, I am the

---

[1] Fayd Kāshānī, Muhammad Muḥsin, *al-Wāfī*, The supplication of the day of 'Arafah by Imam Ḥusain (a), vol. 4, p. 63.

companion of those who accompany Me, the comfort for those who find comfort in remembering Me, the friend of those who befriend me. I choose those who choose Me, and I obey [listen to] those who obey Me. Nobody loves me truly from his heart except that I accept him for Myself and love him, too: None from among My creation is advanced over him.

Whoever truly seeks me shall find Me, and whoever seeks anyone else shall never find Me. So, O people of the earth! Abandon your vain desires, and hurry towards My dignity, My company, My companionship: Feel comfortable about Me so I may give you comfort and hurry to loving you.[1]

[1] Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, al-Jawāhir al-Sanīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsīyyah, p. 191.

How to acquire love for God

Having discussed the important role of loving God in our life, now it is time to talk about the ways to acquire this love or strengthen it in our hearts if we have already been gifted with it.

I. Reflecting on how much He loves us

It is the law of a genuine love that when hearts - from both parties - are open it does not stay with the lover and penetrates the heart of the beloved and soon becomes mutual. Therefore, one of the ways that makes us love someone is to know and understand how much they love us. The best example in this regard is the love that we have for our parents that is mostly based on the love that they show to us. This law of love also works in our relationship with God.

God's love in the Qur'an

The best way to understand the intensity of God's love for us is to refer to His own words, the Holy Qur'an and see how He has introduced Himself and has explained His love for us as His people. When we realise how much He loves us, automatically our hearts respond and the seed of love for God is planted in our hearts.

Terminology of love in the Qur'an

However, before reflecting on God's words, to have a better understanding, we need to become familiar with the different terms that express the concept of love in the Qur'an.

Different derivatives of the words *mawaddah*, *ra'fah*, *raḥmah* and *ḥubb* are used in the Qur'an to deliver the meaning of love with some differences in details.[1] The concept of *mawaddah* is very close to *ḥubb*,[2] and the concept of *ra'fah* is very close to *raḥmah*;[3] these two terms – *ḥubb* and *raḥmah* – and their derivatives are most commonly used in the Qur'an. The word *'ishq* also is used to refer to a kind of intense love in Arabic and sometimes appears in hadith but not in the Qur'an.

Ḥubb is a kind of love that can be either concealed or expressed. Its derivatives have been used in the Qur'an 95 times. *Raḥmah* is a special kind of love which is accompanied by giving and care for the other party, the recipient and comes without any expectation. Its derivatives are used in the Qur'an about 600 times. It is normally translated by the translators of the Qur'an as "mercy", although this seems insufficient. Nevertheless, I have used this translation; therefore, in this book wherever *raḥmah* or mercy are mentioned, I mean this special love which is accompanied by giving.

The numerous occurrences of *raḥmah* and its derivatives in the Qur'an and hadiths show the intensity and inclusiveness

---

[1] *Wadūd* (ودود) and *Ra'ūf* (رؤوف) are two of the names of God which are derived from *mawaddah* and *ra'fah*.

[2] Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Husain, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al*-Qur'an, p. 860.

[3] Ibn Manẓūr, Muhammad, Lisān al-'Arab, vol. 9, p. 112.

of love of God for His people. However, since love indicated with *raḥmah* has to be accompanied by giving and we do not have anything to offer to God because whatever we have is a gift from Him, from our side we can use derivatives of *ḥubb* instead. In hadith, God uses *ḥubb* to express His love for the servant that has reached a level of closeness to God such that he is then called "nearest" (*muqarrab*).

Having mentioned a brief account of different Arabic terms used for love, in what follows, I will refer to some points that show how God in His own words, the Qur'an, has introduced Himself to us as the Lord who loves us so much and Who wants us to know Him by this quality more than His other qualities.

The names and qualities of God in the Qur'an

In some hadiths it is said that God has 99 names.[1] In some supplications, 1000 names and qualities are mentioned for God.[2] In this regard in the Qur'an we read:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخالِقُ الْبارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الأَسْماءُ الْحُسْنى

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *al-Tawḥīd li al-Ṣadūq*, p. 194. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّه (ص): إِنَّ لِلَّه تَبَارَكَ و تَعَالَى تِسْعَةً وَ تِسْعِينَ اسْماً مِائَةً إِلا وَاحِداً مَنْ أَحْصَاهَا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

[2] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād*, prayer of Jawshan al-Kabīr, p. 430.

> He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Former.
> To Him belong the Most beautiful Names.
> (Qur'an 59:24)

All the names and attributes of God which are mentioned in the Qur'an in an adjective form sum up to more than 160. They can then be divided into 16 categories, such as unity, wisdom, knowledge justice, and *raḥmah*. The category of *raḥmah* in addition to all the attributes that grammatically are derived from the same root as *raḥmah* (like *Raḥmān*, *Raḥīm*, and *Arḥam al-rāḥimīn*) also includes other qualities related to God's *raḥmah* and such as acts of love like Forgiving (*Ghaffār*, *tawwāb*) and All-Munificent (*Wahhāb*). All together the category of *raḥmah* contains 30 different attributes. The following chart displays this:

Divine Attributes in the Qur'an

As is shown in this chart, the most commonly mentioned qualities are those related to God's *raḥmah* then His knowledge, power, wisdom, and acts; His justice is the sixth in rank. Of course, it should be noted that justice in the Qur'anic sense is much more than bringing criminals to justice; it is more a matter of not doing injustice to anyone and fully observing everyone's rights. It is a kind of righteousness as well. Since the qualities declaring God's punishment are in the category of justice, it can clearly be understood that God has stressed on His love and forgiveness much more than His wrath and punishment.[1]

Raḥmān and Raḥīm

Raḥmān and *Raḥīm* are from the root *raḥmah*. They are the most important and most commonly mentioned qualities of God in the Qur'an. *Raḥmān* is mentioned 169 times and it refers to the inclusive and unconditional love of God. *Raḥīm* is mentioned 227 times, once mentioned with respect to the Prophet (s) and 226 times as a quality for God. *Raḥīm* donates the extra love *(raḥmah)* that is given to the ones that they appreciate the initiative *raḥmah* and they deserve to receive more.[2] This additional love and *raḥmah* is offered normally

---

[1] Muhammad Ali Shomali and Mahnaz Heydarpour, "Image of God in the Qur'an", in *God's Existence and Attributes*.

[2] This is the common usage of *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* but in few verses of the Qur'an they replace each other.

for the believers but in some cases even nonbelievers will benefit from it.

The following refers to different usages of these two qualities:

***Al-Raḥmān* as the name for a chapter.** One chapter of the Qur'an is named al-Raḥmān and the first verse says only "*al-Raḥmān*". The whole chapter is about God's *raḥmah* and love which is manifested in His blessings upon people.

***Al-Raḥmān* as God's proper name.** Among more than hundred names and qualities of God mentioned in the Qur'an, "*Raḥmān*" which refers to His inclusive love and *raḥmah* is the only one that has been chosen by God as the proper noun for Him beside "Allah:"

> قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمنَ أَيًّا ما تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الأَسْماءُ الْحُسْنى
>
> Say: "Call upon Allah or call upon al-Raḥmān: whatever name you call upon Him (is good), for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. (Qur'an 17:110)

In addition to abovementioned verse, in 44 other verses God, instead of Allah, has referred to Himself using *Al-Raḥmān.*[1] For example:

---

[1] These verses are in Chapter Ra'd, verse 30; Chapter Isrā', verse 110; Chapter Maryam, verses 18, 26, 44, 45, 58, 61, 69, 75, 78, 87, 88, 91, 92, 93, 96; Chapter Tāhā, verses 5, 108, 109; Chapter Anbiyā', verses 26, 36,

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَانِ وَفْدًا

The day We shall gather the God-wary toward Al- Raḥmān, as a delegation. (Qur'an 19:85)

The repetition of "*bism-i Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*". All the chapters of the Qur'an except Chapter al-Tawbah start with "*bism-i Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*" ("in the name of God who has inclusive *raḥmah* (love) for everything and has extra *raḥmah* (love) for the believers"). According to many scholars,[1] it is part of each chapter. That is, it has been revealed 114 times,[2] not just once; it was not just appended to the beginning of the chapters. Frequent repetition of this verse is another manifestation of God's *raḥmah* and the high status that it has among other attributes of God.

Regarding Chapter al-Tawbah, which does not start with "*bism-i Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm,*" normally the commentator of the Qur'an clarifies its absence by saying that

---

42; Chapter Furqān, verses 26, 59, 60, 63; Chapter Shu'arā', verse 5; Chapter Yāsīn, verses 11, 23, 52; Chapter Zukhruf, verses 17, 19, 20, 33, 36, 45, 81; Chapter Qāf, verse 33; Chapter Raḥmān, verse 1; Chapter Malik, verses 3, 19, 20, 29; Chapter Naba', verses 37, 38. Since in verse 60 of Chapter Furqān it has been used twice altogether using al-Raḥmān as a proper noun rather than as an adjective, it occurs 46 times in the Qur'an.

[1] Makārim Shīrāzī, Nāṣir, *al-Amthal fī Tafsīr Kitāb Allah al-Munzal,* vol. 1, pp. 28-29.

[2] There are 114 chapters in the Qur'an and since in Chapter Naml in addition to the beginning, it has been mentioned also in in the middle of the chapter all together the number of repetitions of this verse is equal to the number of the verses of the Qur'an.

because this chapter was revealed to warn the pagans, if it had started with God's *raḥmah* and love, the pagans would not have taken the warning seriously.

While the explanation is appropriate, one can also add that God the Almighty could have mentioned other qualities which refer to His wrath and punishment, but He preferred not to do that and not even to mention His name alone without being accompanied by His *raḥmah*.

The repetition of *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* in Chapter al-Fatiḥah. Chapter al-Fatiḥah is the opening of the word of God, the Qur'an. It has a high status; this chapter is the extract of the Qur'an in the sense that it provides a brief introduction to the three major beliefs: knowing God, knowing prophethood and knowing Resurrection.[1] In this chapter that is dedicated to being a brief explanation of the most important doctrines of the religion, *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* are mentioned at the beginning and repeated in the middle of the chapter:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

---

[1] Jawādī Āmulī, 'Abdullāh, *Tasnīm Tafsīr Qur'an Karīm*, vol. 1, pp. 258-264.

> In the Name of God, the All-Merciful (inclusive mercy), the All-Merciful (exclusive mercy). All praise belongs to God, Lord of all beings, the All- Merciful (inclusive mercy), the All-Merciful (exclusive mercy), Master of the Day of Retribution. (Qur'an 1:1-4)

Repeating these two qualities which refer to God's inclusive and exclusive love in this chapter which summarises the major beliefs is further evidence of their significance compared to God's other qualities.

Another beautiful point that I would like to refer to regarding this chapter is the order of the concepts. Similar to other chapters, it starts with "*bism-i Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm;*" then He refers to His lordship in this world ("Lord of all the all beings"). Then He again mentions His *raḥmah* ("*al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*"), and after that He talks about His Mastership in the hereafter ("Master of the Day of Retribution"). Wrapping His Lordship in this world and His Mastership in the hereafter with His *raḥmah* and love could mean that He wants to tell us that He governs this world and the hereafter with His love and mercy.

Although the amount of love that God has for His people in this world is incredible, according to hadith, God's love and *raḥmah* has a hundred portions. All the love in this world including the love of all parents for their children is only one

portion; the remaining 99 portions are reserved for the hereafter.[1]

Moreover, we are required to recite this chapter in each first two units of our obligatory daily prayers; therefore, it is necessary to repeat these two attributes (*al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*) at least 60 times a day.[2] It means that God wants us to remember Him with His love and repeat that so much so that it penetrates our hearts that our Lord is a loving lord Who loves us so much. This is a lesson that we should learn and put into practice – that is, even when we are not doing our daily prayer say repeatedly to ourselves: "God loves me."

---

[1] Ḥillī, Ḥasan, *Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq*, p. 374. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ (ص) قَالَ: إِنَّ لِلَّه مائَةَ رَحْمَةٍ أَنْزَلَ مِنْهَا رَحْمَةً وَاحِدَةً بَيْنَ الإِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ وَالْبَهائِمِ وَالْهَوامِّ فِيهَا يَتَعاطَفُونَ وَبِهَا يَتَراحَمُونَ وَبِهَا يَعْطِفُ الْوَحْشُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا فَأَخَّرَ اللَّهُ تِسْعاً وَتِسْعِينَ رَحْمَةً يَرْحَمُ بِهَا عِبادَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيامَةِ.

[2] In the first two units of our obligatory daily prayers in addition to Chapter Fātiḥah we are required to recite another Chapter of our choice. All chapters start with "*bism-i Allah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*" which mentions God's *raḥmah* twice (*Raḥmān, Raḥīm*). Since we have to recite two chapters that means four times God's *raḥmah* is mentioned. Add to this the fact that in Chapter Fātiḥah God's *raḥmah* is again mentioned in the third verse two times, the number adds up to 6 in each unit of the prayer. If you times this by the number of units in each prayer and the number of prayers -five times a day-, you will see that every day we are required to repeat and mention God's *raḥmah* sixty times.

Characteristics of God's *raḥmah* (love)

I have already mentioned that *raḥmah* which is normally translated as "mercy" in the Qur'anic terminology and hadith means a special kind of love that is accompanied by giving, and with its derivatives is the most common term used to indicate the concept of love in the Qur'an. Hence, to understand the intensity of the love of God for us here, I am going to refer to some of the characteristics of God's *raḥmah*.

God's raḥmah is inclusive

One of the characteristics of God's *raḥmah* is that it does not exclude anyone and embraces everything. As the Qur'an says:

رَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

My mercy encompasses all things (Qur'an 7:156)

فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُل رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ

But if they deny you, say, "Your Lord is dispenser of an all-embracing mercy". (Qur'an 7:147)

This was the message to the pagans: although they resisted the invitation of the Prophet (s), God still sent them the message of love and kindly invited them again to the truth.

God has made raḥmah incumbent on Himself

God owes us nothing, and no one can force Him to do anything, but it is very beautiful that our Lord has made *raḥmah* necessary on Himself:

كَتَبَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

He has made mercy incumbent upon Himself.
(Qur'an 6:12)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God says to the Prophet (s) that when believers who have committed wrong actions, repent and come to him, he should say *salām* ("peace") to them and tell them that their Lord has made *raḥmah* necessary for himself – not to worry, for He forgives them:

وَ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوءاً بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَ أَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

When those who have faith in Our signs come to you, say, "Peace to you! Your Lord has made mercy incumbent upon Himself: whoever of you commits an evil [deed] out of ignorance and then repents after that and reforms, then He is indeed All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.
(Qur'an 6:54)

God's raḥmah is accompanied by His Knowledge

God's knowledge is as inclusive as His *raḥmah*. We see in the Qur'an that these two qualities of His are mentioned together:

> الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَ مَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَ عِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَ اتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَ قِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ
>
> Those who bear the Throne, and those around it, celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him, and they plead for forgiveness for the faithful: "Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge. Forgive those who repent and follow Your way and save them from the punishment of hell." (Qur'an 40:7)

We can refer here to two beautiful points regarding God's inclusive *raḥmah* and knowledge.

He knows our mistakes, yet He loves us. The first point is that God knows everything about us, any good or bad action that we do, whether openly or in secret. As we read in hadith, if other people knew the secrets that God knows about His servant, they abandon him, and, after his death, they would not even bury him.[1] But although our loving God knows all

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Amālī li al-Ṣadūq*, p. 446. The full text is Arabic is as follows:

the wrong actions and sins that His servants do – which are acts of disobedience and signs of ungratefulness towards Him – He treats them patiently and waits for them to regret and return to Him. This patience is so great that is like as if the servant has done nothing wrong:

الحمد لله الذی یَحلُم بی کَأنّی لاذنبَ لی

> All praise due to God, who is forbearing with me to the extent that it is as if I have done no sins.[1]

Elsewhere in another supplication we read:

فیا مَنْ هُوَ بِالْغافلینَ عَنْ ذِکْرِهِ رَحیمٌ رَؤُفٌ، وَ بِجَذْبِهِمْ اِلی بابِهِ وَدُودٌ عَطُوفٌ

> O He who He is loving and clement toward those heedless of His remembrance and compassionate and tender in drawing them to His door![2]

God grants our requests according to our best interest. Second point is that God out of His *raḥmah* meets the needs of His people, and His knowledge of their needs firstly, and of the

---

أمیرُ الْمُؤْمنین(ع): لَوْ تَکاشَفْتُمْ ما تَدافَنْتُم

[1] Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mujtahid wa Silāḥ al-Muta'abbid*, Prayer of Abū Ḥamzah by Imam Sajjād (a), vol. 2, p. 582.

[2] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād*, Imam Sajjād (a), The Whispered Prayer of the Devotees by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 412.

best way and time to eliminate it secondly, will lead to the best answer for their request. In many cases even before they ask, their needs are granted, and this includes even those who do not know Him and do not believe in Him. We read in the supplication recommended to be recited in the month of Rajab:

يَا مَنْ يُعْطِي مَنْ سَأَلَهُ يَا مَنْ يُعْطِي مَنْ لَمْ يَسْأَلْهُ وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْهُ تَحَنُّناً مِنْهُ وَ رَحْمَةً

> O He who gives to one who asks Him.! O He who gives to one who does not ask Him and does not know Him, out of His compassion and mercy.[1]

It helps us to understand that if sometimes our requests are granted with delay or not at all, it is not because God has forgotten us or does not care about us, but rather it is out of His concern for our own best interest. According to the hadith even in this case God is so kind that in the hereafter for those requests that are not granted He gives so much blessings to the person that he would wish that no prayer of his had been granted in the world due to what he sees from the excellent rewards.[2]

---

[1] Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali, *al-Iqbāl bi al-A'māl al-Ḥasanah*, Prayer of month of Rajab by Imam Sādiq (a), vol. 3, p. 211.

[2] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 491. The Arabic text is as follows:

God's raḥmah is accompanied by His Richness

God is the absolutely Rich one who does not need anyone but everyone needs Him and at the same time He has inclusive *raḥmah*.

وَ رَبُّکَ الْغَنِیُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ

And your Lord is the rich dispenser of mercy
(Qur'an 6:133)

God's richness besides His *raḥmah* makes His *raḥmah* special in different aspects.

God loves us without expectation. Sometimes the *raḥmah* that humans have for one another is because there is an expectation that, in the future, the other party will do something for them. However, God is rich and self-sufficient; therefore, His *raḥmah* is not to expect compensation from His people in the future. We read in the supplication for month of Ramadan:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِی تَحَبَّبَ إِلَیَّ وَ هُوَ غَنِیٌّ عَنِّی

فَإِذَا کَانَ یَوْمُ الْقِیَامَةِ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ: عَبْدِی دَعَوْتَنِی فَأَخَّرْتُ إِجَابَتَکَ وَ ثَوَابَکَ کَذَا وَ کَذَا وَ دَعَوْتَنِی فِی کَذَا وَ کَذَا فَأَخَّرْتُ إِجَابَتَکَ وَ ثَوَابَکَ کَذَا وَ کَذَا. قَالَ: فَیَتَمَنَّی الْمُؤْمِنُ أَنَّهُ لَمْ یُسْتَجَبْ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ فِی الدُّنْیَا مِمَّا یَرَی مِنْ حُسْنِ الثَّوَابِ.

> All praise be to God Who tries to win my affection while He does not need me.[1]

God has *raḥmah* for us and infinite wealth to give. Sometimes people are wealthy but do not have any love or compassion and are indifferent to people' needs. On the other hand, some people are kind, but they themselves are poor, and the maximum they can do is empathize with the person in need which is, of course, very much appreciated. But God has inclusive *raḥmah*, so He is ready to give, and at the same time He is the absolutely rich: "To Him belongs all that is in heavens and in the earth."[2]

---

[1] Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mujtahid wa Silāḥ al-Muta'abbid*, Prayer of Abū Ḥamzah by Imam Sajjād (a), vol. 2, p. 582.

[2] (Qur'an 2:255)

God's raḥmah is accompanied by His power

In addition to other ways of expressing His power like verbs or sentences, more than one hundred times God refers to His power by using adjectives like *qādir*, *qadīr*, *muqtadir* and *'azīz*.[1] *'azīz* is mentioned 90 times; 14 times it is mentioned along with *raḥīm* (which refers to His *raḥmah*). One of the instances is the following verse:

وَ إِنَّ رَبَّکَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

Your Lord is the All-mighty, the All-merciful.
(Qur'an 26:9)

When someone is benevolent and rich, that person also needs power so that no one can stop him when he wants to give and help others, and these qualities are some of the characteristics that God possesses. We read in the Qur'an:

مَّا يَفْتَحِ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا

Whatever mercy God unfolds for the people,
no one can withhold it (Qur'an 35:2)

God helps people in different ways and no one has the power to stop Him. We can refer to two different examples of this matter in the life of Prophet Moses. To rescue the Israelites that were followed by Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, God

---

[1] In modern Arabic *'azīz* is used synonym to dear but according to its root it means someone who is invincible because of being powerful. Ibn Manẓūr, Muhammad, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 5, p. 374.

parted the sea so that they could cross it; when the Israelites crossed it, God closed the sea again. Here God granted a miracle to help the Israelites against their enemies.

وَ إِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَاكُمْ

> And when We parted the sea for you, and We saved you. (Qur'an 2:50)

A second example is when Pharaoh decided to kill Prophet Moses at the very moment of his birth. He started to kill any male child of the Israelite, then by the plan of God, the family of Pharaoh became the saviour for Prophet Moses and he grew up in the best way in the house of his enemy. Thus, Pharaoh unknowingly became a supporter of Prophet Moses and part of God's plan to defeat himself. This time it was not an obvious miracle, but God has given us the key point in His plan when He says in the Qur'an:

وَ لَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَى أَنِ
اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ
عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُ وَ أَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي وَ لِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي

> Certainly, we granted you a favour another time, when We revealed to your mother whatever was revealed: Put him in the casket, and cast it into the river. Then the river will cast it on the bank, and he shall be picked up by an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his. And I cast

upon you a love from Me, and that you might be reared under My eyes. (Qur'an 20:37-39)

God made Prophet Moses loveable ("I cast upon you a love from Me") so that whoever saw him would love him. Therefore, when he was born, he was loved by the midwife and she did not report his birth to the Pharaoh's soldier. Soon after, when the wife of Pharaoh took him from the river, the Pharaoh did not kill him and he was brought up in his palace safely and comfortably. Hence, in this plan of God, love became a shield for Prophet Moses in front of the enemy.

In any case whether it is a manifest miracle or not, whether we know the key point of the plan or not, God works with His plans in the life of each of us. Therefore, it is only God whom we should trust and rely on. Although we should use worldly means and do our best, we also should bear in mind that the cause of all causes is God. Even if sometimes we see all the doors are closed, He has knowledge and power, so He knows the best way to help us. God says in the Qur'an:

وَ مَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مَخْرَجًا وَ يَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَ مَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

And whoever is wary of God, He shall make a way out for him and provide for him from whence he does not reckon. And whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. Indeed,

God carries through His command. Certainly, God has set a measure for everything. (Qur'an 65:2-3)

Hence, our loving Lord asks us to only rely on Him so that out of His love and *raḥmah*, He helps us:

وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ

And put your trust in the All-mighty, the All-merciful. (Qur'an 26:217)

He has not left us to other people who may either themselves be in need, or if they have limited sources of wealth and power, they may not be merciful enough to help us; if we ask them, they may humiliate us. The Prayer of Abū Ḥamzah says:

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِی وَكَلَنِی إِلَيْهِ فَأَكْرَمَنِی وَلَمْ يَكِلْنِی إِلَى النَّاسِ فَيُهِينُونِی

All praise be to God alone Who has accepted me to depend upon Him and, thus, honoured me and He has not left me to the people who will thus humiliate me.[1]

---

[1] Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Miṣbāḥ al-Mujtahid wa Silāḥ al-Muta'abbid*, Prayer of Abū Ḥamzah by Imam Sajjād (a), vol. 2, p. 582.

II. Reflecting on God's blessings

The blessings and bounties that God has provided us with all are His gifts to us and another sign of His love for us. Because of their importance, it is better to discuss them separately.

Giving gifts as a sign of love of the giver for the receiver follows the law of love, which I mentioned earlier, and leads to a mutual love between giver and receiver. In a beautiful conversation God said to Prophet Moses: "O Moses! Love me and make my people love me." The Prophet Moses replied: "My Lord! You know that there is no one more beloved to me than you. However, [tell me] how can I make your love the greatest thing in hearts of Your servants?" God said: "Remind My servants of My favours and My blessings upon them."[1]

Everything that we have is God's gift to us. We had nothing and indeed we were nothing, and He gave us everything that

---

[1] Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī, Sa'īd, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, p. 161.The full text in Arabic is as follows:

أَوْحَى اللّٰهُ تَعَالَى إِلَى مُوسَى: أَحْبِبْنِي وَ حَبِّبْنِي إِلَى خَلْقِي قَالَ مُوسَى: يَا رَبِّ!
إِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ أَحَدٌ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْكَ فَكَيْفَ لِي رَبِّي بِقُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ.
فَأَوْحَى اللّٰهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ: فَذَكِّرْهُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَ آلَائِي فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَذْكُرُونَ مِنِّي إِلَّا خَيْرًا

we have. But unfortunately, many of us take most of His blessings for granted. God says in the Qur'an:

قَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ

Few of My servants are grateful. (Qur'an 34:13)

As human beings, it is in our nature that we want to love and also to be loved. When we realise that someone loves us, it generates a good feeling and pleasure in us. Hence, to be mindful and attentive to God's blessing as His gifts and signs of His love for us creates pleasure in our hearts.

Therefore, it is a good practice that every morning when we get up remind ourselves of a few of God's blessings upon us. It helps us to be grateful to Him. It satisfies our desire to be loved, and brings joy and a good feeling in our hearts to start a good day. And more importantly, it generates love for Him in our hearts.

Here I refer only to some of the most important examples of God's blessings upon us.

Our existence

God has the source of everything:

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُه

There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us. (Qur'an 15:21)

And at the same time, He is loving, merciful and benevolent in the absolute sense.

وَ رَبُّکَ الْغَنِیُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَة

Your Lord is the Rich, the Dispenser of mercy.
(Qur'an 6:133)

When someone has characteristics such as, richness and love, they want to share or give what they have to others, and that is why God created the world and brought us to existence.

Love: the purpose of creation

Although in the Qur'an, several other reasons are mentioned as God's purpose for creation, reflecting on them and also other verses of the Qur'an, we realise that the main purpose behind creation is God's intense and inclusive *raḥmah* and love.

To elaborate on this point, I will explore different reasons for creation which are indicated by different verses of the Qur'an.

To know God's absolute power and knowledge

اللَّهُ الَّذی خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَماواتٍ وَ مِنَ الأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ یَتَنَزَّلُ الأَمْرُ بَیْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدیرٌ وَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحاطَ بِکُلِّ شَیْءٍ عِلْماً

It is God who has created seven heavens, and of the earth [a number] similar to them. The

command gradually descends through them, that you may know that God has power over all things, and that God comprehends all things in knowledge. (Qur'an 65:12)

This verse says that looking at creation as a whole makes us understand the absolute power and knowledge of God.

To worship God

وَ ما خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَ الإِنْسَ إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُونِ

I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship [serve] Me. (Qur'an 51:56)

"Worshipping" here means sincere servitude – being a true servant in all aspects of life, which also leads the servant to acquire a better knowledge and understanding of his Lord.[1]

To test

الَّذِی خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَ الْحَیوةَ لِیَبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً وَ هُوَ الْعَزِیزُ الْغَفُورُ

He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct.

---

[1] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 18, p. 386:

لو كان للعبادة غرض كالمعرفة الحاصلة بها و الخلوص لله كان هو الغرض الأقصى و العبادة غرضا متوسطا.

> And He is the All-mighty, the All-Forgiving. (Qur'an 67:2)

In this verse God says that we created you to test you so that those who act righteously will be rewarded for their conduct. As we read in the following verse:

> وَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّماواتِ وَ الأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ لِتُجْزى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِما كَسَبَتْ وَ هُمْ لايُظْلَمُونَ
>
> God created the heavens and the earth with reason, so that every soul may be requited for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged. (Qur'an 45:22)

Out of love (raḥmah)

> وَ لَوْ شاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً واحِدَةً وَ لايَزالُونَ مخْتَلِفِينَ إِلا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَ لِذالِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ
>
> Had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community; but they continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy, and that (mercy) is why He created them (Qur'an 11:118-119)

People often dispute and waste their time and energy arguing with each other – except for those who have received mercy from God. These people have realised the truth and do not dispute over it. They simply commit themselves to the truth.

If we all did the same, there would be no need to dispute, as God says that He has created us in order to give us mercy.

In this verse, God says that He could make all human beings united in the sense that everyone would know and believe in the truth. But, out of His *raḥmah* (mercy), He guided them towards the truth but let them freely find it. However, continuously people dispute over the truth except the ones that follow God's guidance, find the truth and commit themselves to the truth. These are the ones who have benefited from God's *raḥmah.*

Then He says "because of that" (*li-dhālika*), He created them. According the commentators of the Qur'an, "that" refers to God's mercy;[1] therefore, God is saying in this verse that not only did He guide human beings out of mercy but from the very beginning He created them out of His mercy (*raḥmah*).

These purposes mentioned in the Qur'an for creation do not contradict each other; rather they complement each other. The story of the creation starts when our loving God out of His inclusive *raḥmah* and generosity created the world and out of His knowledge and wisdom gave each type of creature the potential to go towards their perfection. Among the creatures, human beings are granted the highest level of

---

[1] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 11, p. 65.

perfection, which is getting close to God. In a *qudsī* narration, God speaks of the creation:

> عبدی خلقت الأشیاء لأجلک و خلقتک لأجلی، وهبتک الدنیا بالإحسان و الآخرة بالإیمان
>
> O My servant! I created the things for your sake and I created you for My sake. I gifted this world to you out of my benevolence and the hereafter through your faith.[1]

To be able to get close to God, humans need a proper understanding of God and His characteristics, and so this information and guidance is also provided for them.[2] Then when they come to know Him, they will find Him the only one worthy of being worshipped and served. There are also some tests provided for human beings so that, by passing them, they show their sincere servitude, and it helps them to grow spiritually. In addition, these tests are opportunities that provide the ground for receiving extra *raḥmah* and love. In this regard, a hadith says:

خلقهم لیفعلوا ما یستوجبون به رحمته فیرحمهم

---

[1] Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, al-Jawāhir al-Sanīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsīyyah, p. 710.

[2] We will discuss the guidance as one of God's blessings later.

> God created man so that they would do something to deserve His *raḥmah*; then He would show them (more) *raḥmah*.[1]

Thus, the different reasons that are mentioned in the Qur'an for the aim of creation complement each other to show how God's *raḥmah*, benevolence, richness, power, knowledge, and wisdom work together so that we human beings as part of the world of creation came into existence.

Sustenance

After our merciful God brought us to existence, He provided us with the things we need for our maintenance. One of the very first things is sustenance; He guaranteed this for all living creatures, including human beings. We read in the Qur'an:

> وَ مَا مِن دَابَّةٍ فِي الأَرْضِ إِلا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا
>
> And there is no moving creature on the earth but upon God is its sustenance. (Qur'an 11:6)

Every living entity in this vast world receives its sustenance from God. Given the fact that divine knowledge encompasses everything, every living creature, from gigantic animals to small creatures that are hardly seen with the eye, whether they have a permanent habitation or, like migratory birds, are constantly moving to different places, they receive their

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, vol.1, p. 13.

sustenance on a regular basis. Our Almighty and Merciful God, with all His knowledge, is aware of every living being and gives them sustenance every day, perfectly suited to their needs in terms of quality and quantity. He is aware of the needs of billions of living beings in the air, on the earth, under the ground, at the bottom of the sea and in mothers' wombs.

If we see in some part of the world people are suffering from poverty and hunger, it is not because of a shortage of resources on earth but the mismanagement of human beings; otherwise there is enough for everyone on earth.

Making the world convenient for our life

God brought us to existence and created the earth as a place for our habitation and it in a way that we can live on comfortably. In the Qur'an, He mentions some of the things that He has provided for us and then says that He did that because He loves us. These are things that we may either not notice or take for granted but in fact they are blessings that we are provided with by our God out of love and care.

One of the important examples of preparation of the earth for our comfort is the existence of day and night. We have darkness at night for a peaceful rest and we have light during the day to be able to work to make our living.

وَ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَ النَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

> Out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein and that you may seek from His grace and so that you may give thanks. (Qur'an 28:73)

It is scientifically proven that when exposed to the radiation of light, the body becomes active and ready to move while in the dark of the night, the body organs fall into a deep calm and regenerate their energy, and humans regain their vitality. Additionally, if the sun shone continuously, the temperature of the earth would become so high that living things would not be able to survive.

God has provided us with proper living conditions but moreover He has made everything on this earth at our disposal and control in the way that we use it as a means to have a better life. He says in the Qur'an:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ

> Have you not regarded that God has disposed for you[r *benefit*] whatever there is in the earth? (Qur'an 22:65)

Then in the same verse He says that He did that out of love for all of us:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

> For indeed God is Compassionate and Merciful to mankind. (Qur'an 22:65)

Guidance

Out of His love and generosity He brought us to existence, then provided us with proper living conditions and sustenance. However, we were not created simply to enjoy this worldly life; rather we were created to reach a valuable and sacred goal: getting close to God and enjoying the pleasure of His full and permanent presence in our hearts. We have been given the potential to reach this goal, but we need guidance to actualize it. Therefore, He provided us with guidance on different levels and different ways. We read in the Qur'an:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى

He said, "Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it." (Qur'an 20:50)

At the very beginning God, placed the intellect and *fiṭrah* in our creation. Scholars of the Quran call this the "generative guidance". *Fiṭrah* includes the inclination towards truth, virtue, righteous deeds, and similar things, but, more importantly, *fiṭrah* consists of a general and innate knowledge of God and inclination to seek God.[1] It works like a compass that directs the heart towards God.

These two, intellect and *fiṭrah*, are important and helpful, but they are not enough to keep us going in the right direction or

---

[1] Shomali, Muhammad Ali, *Islamic Belief System*, p. 23.

to teach us all we need for the long journey towards perfection. Therefore, God started to communicate to us. In His communication, He introduced Himself and His characteristics and guided us towards what we need for the spiritual and social aspects of our lives, and provided instructions that we need to form our relationship with God and with other fellow human beings.

We received these communications throughout history as divine books and in the final one, the Qur'an, we read:

يا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَ شِفاءٌ لِما فِي الصُّدُورِ وَ هُدىً وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

> O mankind! There has certainly come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what [disease] is in the hearts, and a guidance and mercy for the believers. (Qur'an 10:57)

In this verse God the Almighty introduces the Qur'an as advice, a cure for the illnesses of the heart, guidance and *raḥmah*. Out of His *raḥmah* and love He talked to us through these words to guide us.

It should be noted that at the end of the verse when God says, "a guidance and mercy for the believers," it does not mean that God's guidance, *raḥmah,* and love are exclusive to the believers; rather they are for everyone, since in the beginning of the verse, He addresses all mankind. However, it is clear

that only the people who follow the guidance are the ones who will benefit from it. It will be our loss if we do not appreciate the blessings we have being offered.[1]

In another verse God says that because He loves us, He is sending His words to us to guide us and take us from darkness towards the truth and the source of light:

> هُوَ الَّذی یُنَزِّلُ عَلی عَبْده آیات بَیِّنات لِیُخْرِجَکُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمات إِلَی النُّورِ وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِکُمْ لَرَؤُفٌ رَحیمٌ
>
> It is He who sends down clear communications upon His servant that He may bring you out of darkness into light, and indeed God is most kind and merciful to you. (Qur'an 57:9)

In any case, communicating with us and sending the book is the second level of guidance that God has provided us with. Since it is not possible for the book to be sent to everyone individually and not all people are ready or capable to receive God's words, He chose someone qualified to deliver His word to us as His messenger. This messenger also teaches us the

---

[1] God says in the Qur'an:

> وَ نُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ما هُوَ شِفاءٌ وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنینَ وَ لا یَزیدُ الظَّالِمینَ إِلاَّ خَساراً
>
> We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss. (Qur'an 17:82)

deeper level of the word that we are not able to understand on our own. We read in the Qur'an:

كَما أَرْسَلْنا فيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آياتِنا وَ يُزَكِّيكُمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ ما لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

As We sent to you an Apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. (Qur'an 2:151)

This person is also our role model:

لَقَدْ كانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

In the Apostle of God there is certainly for you a good exemplar. (Qur'an 33:21)

Since God loves His people greatly, He chose a qualified person who treats His people in the best way; therefore the messenger should possess the best traits of character. In praising the Prophet (s), God says:

وَ إِنَّكَ لَعَلى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

And indeed you possess a great character. (Qur'an 68:4)

Moreover, this is the message of God's love for His people, so it has to be delivered with love. God says to the Prophet (s):

وَ ما أَرْسَلْناکَ إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً لِلْعالَمین

We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations. (Qur'an 21:107)

Then God introduces the Prophet (s) to the people as someone who is one of them and who therefore knows them and their problems, and has love, care and concern for all of them:

لَقَدْ جاءَکُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِکُمْ عَزیزٌ عَلَیْهِ ما عَنِتُّمْ حَریصٌ عَلَیْکُمْ

There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he is full of concern for you. (Qur'an 9:128)

And a person who believes in his message and comes to him will benefit more from his love and care.[1] The above-mentioned verse ends:

بِالْمُؤْمِنینَ رَؤُفٌ رَحیمٌ

---

[1]As we mentioned earlier God has inclusive love and *raḥmah* for everyone (*Raḥmān*) and He has extra love for believers (*Rahīm*). Since the Prophet is the closest person to God so he has resembled God the most and he manifests these two characters. It is interesting that the word *raḥīm* has been used in the Qur'an 226 times for God and one time only for the Prophet (the instance in this verse).

Zamakhsharī in his exegesis of the Qur'an compares the *raḥmah* of Prophet Muhammad (s) to a spring with abundant water that God the Almighty makes gush out to the world; whoever does not drink it has deprived himself. Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, p. 138.

> And most kind and merciful to the faithful. (Qur'an 9:128)

The Prophet (s) did his job in the best possible way. I will discuss it later in this book.

This phase of God's communication and sending the book and the Prophet is the second level of guidance which is called "legislative guidance" and is also for everyone. However, there is extra care and guidance for those who appreciate it and embark upon their spiritual journey. The important point is that we should start the journey, be consistent, and do what we already know; then we can be sure that we will receive guidance for the next step. The Qur'an tells of how Prophet Ibrahim spoke to his people who were pagans. He told them that he did not worship their gods and that he was sure that the One who had created him would guide him:

> وَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لأَبِيهِ وَ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ
>
> When Abraham said to his father and his people, "I repudiate what you worship, excepting Him who originated me; He will guide me." (Qur'an 43:26-27)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an he is quoted as saying:

> إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

I am going toward my Lord, Who will guide me. (Qur'an 37:99)

Regarding the Companions of the Cave also we read in the Qur'an:

إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ ءَامَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَ زِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى

They were youths who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance (Qur'an 18:13)

Above all different types of general guidance that are mentioned God has special care and a special plan for each individual whether they are believers or non-believers. He provides opportunities in our life that we should be careful not to lose.

If we start our journey towards God, not only He will show us the way, but He will be with us all the way:

إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me. (Qur'an 26:62)

Opening the gate of repentance

Although God the Almighty has guided all human beings towards perfection and felicity in different ways, human beings have free will and may err or choose the wrong way. Although after being guided, people are responsible for the

path they choose and what they do, out of His love and *rahmah*, God has opened the gate of repentance. He gives them the chance to come back and forgives them even if they have spent most of their lives going the wrong way, whether they were negligent believers, or did not believe in God at all. God wants them to come back and if they repent sincerely, He forgives them. A beautiful hadith describes how happy a traveller who has lost his ride and all his provision in a dark night would be when he suddenly finds them, but that God becomes even happier when a sinful person repents.[1]

Not only is God so kind to be patient with sinners and give them time and chance to regret their mistakes and return to Him, but He is also eagerly waiting for them so He can embrace them with His love. In a *qudsī* hadith, God says to Prophet David:

> لَو يَعلَمُ المُدبِرونَ عَنّی کَیفَ انتظاری لَهُم وَرِفقی بهم و شَوقی اِلَی
> تَرکِ مَعاصیهم لَماتُوا شَوقاً اِلیَّ و تَقطَّعَت أوصالُهُم مِن مَحَبَّتی
>
> O David! If those who have turned away from me knew how much I am waiting for them and

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 435. The full text in Arabic is follows:

> امام کاظم (ع): إنَّ اللّهَ تَعالَی أشَدُّ فَرحاً بِتَوبَةِ عَبدِه مِنْ رَجُلٍ أضَلَّ رَاحِلَتَهُ وَ زَادَهُ فی لَیلَةٍ ظَلْمَاءَ فَوَجَدَهَا فَاللّهُ أشَدُّ فَرَحاً بِتَوبَةِ عَبدِه مِنْ ذَلکَ الرَّجُلِ بِرَاحِلَتِه حِینَ وَجَدَهَا.

am considerate with them and eager that they stop committing sins, they would have died out of eagerness towards Me, and the joints of their body would have separated from each other out of My love.[1]

Which kind of sins are forgiven?

There is a very beautiful verse in the Qur'an in this regard which is one of the most reassuring verses:

قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say [that God declares] "O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God will forgive all sins. Indeed, He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful." (Qur'an 39:53)

The language in this verse is affectionate; at the beginning of the verse, God addresses all His sinful people whether they are believers or not[2] and calls them "My servants". In the

---

[1] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad, *al-Mahajjah al-Bayḍa' fī Tahdhīb al-Aḥyā'*, vol. 8, p. 62.

[2] Tabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al*-Qur'an, vol. 11, p. 65:

و بالجملة شمول «عبادي» في الآية للمشركين لا ينبغي أن يرتاب فيه. و القول بأن المراد به المشركون خاصة نظرا إلى سياق الآيات كما نقل عن ابن عباس أقرب إلى القبول من تخصيصه بالمؤمنين.

middle of the verse, He mentions His *raḥmah* and finishes the verse by mentioning His attributes of forgiveness and *raḥmah* again.

God tells His sinful people not to despair because He will forgive all their sins. He uses the word "sins" in the plural and accompanied by the definite article *al-* (*al-dhunūb*).[1] For more emphasis, He uses *inna* (translated here as "indeed") at the beginning of the sentence and the word *jamī'an* ("all") at the end.

This verse is one of most comprehensive verses to indicate that God forgives all the sins. In a hadith we read that there is not any verse most inclusive than this verse.[2] Therefore, even polytheism will be forgiven. However, in another verse we read that God forgives all sins except polytheism:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَ يَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَالِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَى إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

God does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes. And

---

[1] "Sins" (*al-dhunūb*) is in the plural; accompanied by *al-*, it means "all sins".

[2] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad Muhsin, *Tafsīr al-Sāfī*, vol. 4, p. 326. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

امام على (ع): انّه قال ما فى القرآن آية أوسع من «يا عِبادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا الآية.»

> whoever ascribes partners to God has indeed fabricated [a lie] in great sinfulness. (Qur'an 4:48)

Of course, there is no contradiction between these two verses; rather, they are an amazing indication of God's love and *raḥmah*. Polytheism is a great sin, but the difference between polytheism and other sins in regard to forgiveness is that it will not be forgiven except by repentance whereas other sins may be forgiven even without repentance.

For example, a believer who was on the right path but out of ignorance made some mistakes and did not have a chance to repent may be forgiven on the Day of Resurrection because of good actions like charity or acts of worship that others do on behalf of him or by the intercession of the Prophets or good people. In Chapter Tūr, verse 21, God says:

> وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَ اتَّبَعَتهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُم بِإِيمَـٰنٍ أَلحَقنَا بِهِم ذُرِّيَّتَهُم وَمَا أَلَتنَـٰهُم مِّن عَمَلِهِم مِّن شَىْءٍ

> The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith We will make their descendants join them, and We will not stint anything from [the reward of] their deeds. (Qur'an 52:21)

When some believers enter heaven, they will ask about their descendants and children because they cannot find them there. The parents will be told that they had shortcomings and

mistakes that have deprived them of being at the same level. Then the parents will say that they did good deeds for themselves and their children or descendants.[1] So to make the parents happy, God the Almighty will forgive their descendants and make them join the parents without diminishing any of the parents' good deeds.[2]

Sometimes because of the good deeds of a person himself, his sins will be forgiven.[3] We read in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

Indeed, good deeds take away misdeeds. (Qur'an 11:114)

In the case of minor sins, it can be understood from the Qur'an that if someone does not commit a major sin, then all his minor sins will be forgiven without need for repentance.[4] God says in the Qur'an:

---

[1] Suyūṭī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr, vol. 6, p. 119:

إذا دخل الرجل الجنة سال عن أبويه و ذريته و ولده فيقال انهم لم‌يبلغوا درجتک و عملک فيقول يا رب قد عملت لی و لهم فيؤمر بالحاقهم به

[2] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 3, p. 249:

قصرت الأبناء عن عمل الآباء فألحقوا الأبناء بالآباء لتقر بذلک أعينهم.

[3] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 4, p. 370.

[4] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 4, p. 323.

إِن تَجْتَنِبُواْ كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَ نُدْخِلْكُم مُّدْخَلاً كَرِيمًا

If you avoid the major sins that you are forbidden, We will absolve you of your other misdeeds, and admit you to a noble abode. (Qur'an 4:31)

Of course, it has to be noted that minor sins after one insists on doing them or underestimates them become major.

Thus, God the Almighty has opened the gate of repentance for people that go the wrong direction. If they repent sincerely and try to correct their mistakes, He will forgive all their sins. Moreover, He may forgive some of their mistakes and sins even without repentance.

When is the deadline for repentance?

Now the question arises as to how much time people have to come back and repent. We read in the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِن قَرِيبٍ فَأُوْلَئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ كَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

[Acceptance of] repentance is on God only for those who commit evil out of ignorance, then repent promptly. It is such whose repentance God will accept, and God is all-Knowing, all-Wise. (Qur'an 4:17)

The phrase "on God" (*'alā Allāh*) means that God promises to accept repentance and He never breaks His promises.[1] Then the verse says that this acceptance of repentance is for those who "commit evil out of ignorance". This clause encompasses both the believers and the disbelievers, and it is because disbelief is an action of the heart whereas "committing evil" covers deeds of the heart as well as those of other organs, or because disbelief always brings evil actions in its wake. Therefore, "those who commit evil out of ignorance" refers to a disbeliever as well as to a disobeying believer provided they are not wilfully stubborn in their disbelief or sin.[2]

The part of the verse which is more related to our discussion is the phrase "repent promptly" (*min qarīb*), meaning that the acceptance of repentance is for those who repent soon after they commit sins. It seems that this is the answer to our question but then it arises another question that what is meant here by *promptly*: Does it mean that there is no hope for those who have spent years of their life going to wrong direction and now they have woken up and want to come back?

The next verse in the same chapter answers this question and this is another amazing point to show God's love and *raḥmah*:

---

[1] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 4, p. 238.

[2] Ibid. p. 338-239.

وَ لَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ وَ لا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَ هُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنا لَهُمْ عَذاباً أَلِيماً

> But [acceptance of] repentance is not for those who go on committing misdeeds: when death approaches any of them, he says, "I repent now." Nor is it for those who die while they are faithless. For such We have prepared a painful punishment. (Qur'an 4:18)

As we clearly understand from this verse, God has extended the time of repentance to the moment that the sinful person approaches his death. At that moment, repentance is not accepted because now the person can see the consequences of his deeds; therefore, his repentance is out of fear and is not based on sincere regret of his evil deeds. If he had a chance to escape death, he would return to the same way of life. Regarding these people, the Qur'an says:

وَ لَوْ رُدُّوا لَعادُوا لِما نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَ إِنَّهُمْ لَكاذِبُونَ

> And if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden, and most surely, they are liars. (Qur'an 6:28)

These are the kind of people whose repentance is not accepted but since no one knows his or her exact time of

death, even a few minutes before death is not too late for sincere repentance to be accepted by God.

However, as a traveller on the spiritual journey, to avoid losing time and reducing our speed and, more important, to show our sincerity, we should do our best not to commit wrong actions; if they happen, we should not delay repentance.

Doors of hope to compensate the loss

Of course, we are not infallible, and it may happen that out of negligence we make mistakes; in this case or if out of ignorance we have started our spiritual journey very late, we should not despair, because for a sincere servant God has opened many doors of love and hope. He not only forgives sins, but out of love He may replace them with good deeds to help us compensate for the time that we have already lost. We read in the Qur'an:

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَ ءَامَنَ وَ عَمِلَ عَمَلاً صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُوراً رَّحِيمًا

> Except those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, God will replace their misdeeds with good deeds, and god is all-Forgiving, all-Merciful. (Qur'an 25:70)

Besides, a sincere servant has the hope that his misdeeds will be replaced with many times their equivalent in good actions. As we read in one of the supplications by Imam Sajjād (a):

يا مُبَدِّلَ السَّيِّئاتِ بِأَضْعافِها مِنَ الْحَسَناتِ

O the One who replaces the misdeeds with manifold good deeds![1]

Our loving God also removes bad actions from our record so that no one will know. Commenting on verse 25:70, a hadith reads:

> On the Day of Resurrection, the sinful believer will stand before God while no one is aware of his deeds except God. Then God will forgive his sins and replace them in his record with good deeds. Then his deeds will become manifest to the people, and people will say: "This servant of God has not even committed even a single sin."[2]

---

[1] Imam Sajjād (a), *Saḥīfah Sajjādīyyah*, prayer no. 24.

[2] A Group of Scholars, *al-Uṣūl al-Sittah ʿAshar*, p. 152:

امام باقر (ع) قال: يؤتى بالمؤمن المذنب يوم القيمة حتى يقام بين يدى اللّه فيكون اللّه هو الذى يلى حسابه فيما بينه و بينه لايطلع على حسابه الناس فيغفره حتى اذا قرره بسيئاته قال يبدلها حسنات و اظهرها للناس فيقول الناس ما كان لهذا العبد سيئة واحدة.

III. Asking God Himself

Having discussed two different ways to acquire love for God, now I will discuss a direct way to achieve this goal: asking God Himself. We are encouraged to ask God to grant our needs, as we read in the Qur'an:

وَ إسْأَلُواْ اللَّهَ مِن فَضْلِه

And ask God of His grace. (Qur'an 4:32)

He is our Lord; therefore, it is appropriate for us to rely only on Him and ask Him for all our needs. But at least sometimes, let us ask God to give us Himself. Why not put His love and pleasure at the top of our list of requests? Let us sincerely ask Him to fill our hearts with His love, which is a pleasure that is not comparable to any other pleasure. When the love for God becomes so intense in our hearts that He becomes our only beloved, nothing else really matters anymore.

Here I mention a few examples to show how Ahl al-Bayt (a) taught us to pray for love for God, although it is also good that we talk to God in our own words. These are some passages from the whispered prayers of the book *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyyah*. The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers says:

يا مُنى قُلُوبِ الْمُشْتاقينَ وَيا غايَةَ آمالِ الْمُحِبّينَ، اَسْئَلُکَ حُبَّکَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّکَ وَحُبَّ کُلِّ عَمَلٍ يُوصِلُنى اِلى قُرْبِکَ، وَاَنْ تَجْعَلَکَ اَحَبَّ اِلَىَّ مِمّا سِواکَ، وَاَنْ تَجْعَلَ حُبّى اِيّاکَ قآئِداً اِلى رِضْوانِکَ، وَشَوْقى اِلَيْکَ ذائِداً عَنْ عِصْيانِکَ

O deepest wish of the hearts of the yearners! O ultimate desire of the hopes of the lovers! I ask from You love for You, love for those who love You, love for every work which will join me to Your nearness, and that You make Yourself more beloved to me than anything other than You and make my love for You lead to Your pleasure, and my yearning for You protect against disobeying You.[1]

The Whispered Prayer of the Obedient towards God says:

اَللّهُمَّ احْمِلْنا فى سُفُنِ نَجاتِکَ، وَمَتِّعْنا بِلَذيذِ مُناجاتِکَ، وَاَوْرِدْنا حِياضَ حُبِّکَ، وَاَذِقْنا حَلاوَةَ وُدِّکَ وَقُرْبِکَ

O God, carry us in the ships of Your deliverance, give us to enjoy the pleasure of whispered prayer to You, make us drink at the pools of Your love, let us taste the sweetness of Your affection and nearness[2]

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* 'The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers' (*Munājāt al-Muḥibbīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 413.

[2] Ibid. 'The Whispered Prayer of the Obedient Towards God' (*Munājāt al-Muṭīīn li-Allāh*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 411.

The Whispered Prayer of Those who Hold Fast says:

أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَهْلِ خَاصَّتِكَ مِنْ مَلائِكَتِكَ وَ الصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ بَرِيَّتِكَ،...
وَ أَنْ تُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ سَكِينَتِكَ، وَ أَنْ تُغْشِيَ وُجُوهَنَا بِأَنْوَارِ مَحَبَّتِكَ

I ask You by those whom You have singled out, Your angels and the righteous among Your creatures...to send down upon us some of Your tranquillity, to wrap our faces in the lights of love for You.[1]

In another passage from the Whispered Prayer of the Lovers, we read:

إِلَهِي فَاجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنِ اصْطَفَيْتَهُ لِقُرْبِكَ وَ وَلايَتِكَ وَ أَخْلَصْتَهُ لِوُدِّكَ وَ مَحَبَّتِكَ، وَ شَوَّقْتَهُ إِلَى لِقَائِكَ وَ رَضَّيْتَهُ بِقَضَائِكَ، وَ مَنَحْتَهُ بِالنَّظَرِ إِلَى وَجْهِكَ وَ حَبَوْتَهُ بِرِضَاكَ وَ أَعَذْتَهُ مِنْ هَجْرِكَ وَ قِلاكَ، وَ بَوَّأْتَهُ مَقْعَدَ الصِّدْقِ فِي جِوَارِكَ وَ خَصَصْتَهُ بِمَعْرِفَتِكَ وَ أَهَّلْتَهُ بِعِبَادَتِكَ، وَ هَيَّمْتَ قَلْبَهُ لِإِرَادَتِكَ، وَ اجْتَبَيْتَهُ لِمُشَاهَدَتِكَ وَ أَخْلَيْتَ وَجْهَهُ لَكَ، وَ فَرَّغْتَ فُؤَادَهُ لِحُبِّكَ

My God, place us with him whom You have chosen for Your nearness and Your friendship, purified for Your affection and Your love, given yearning for the meeting with You, made pleased with Your decree, granted gazing upon

---

[1] Ibid., 'The Whispered Prayer of Those Who Hold Fast'(*Munājāt al-Mu'taṣimīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 417.

Your face, shown the favour of Your good pleasure, given refuge from separation from You and Your loathing, settled in a sure sitting place in Your neighbourhood, singled out for true knowledge of You, made worthy for worship of You, whose heart You have captivated with Your will, whom You have picked for contemplating You, whose look You have made empty for You, whose heart You have freed for Your love.[1]

In the Whispered Prayer of the Knowers we also read:

إِلَهِي فَاجْعَلْنَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ تَرَسَّخَتْ أَشْجَارُ الشَّوْقِ إِلَيْكَ فِي حَدَائِقِ صُدُورِهِمْ، وَ أَخَذَتْ لَوْعَةُ مَحَبَّتِكَ بِمَجَامِعِ قُلُوبِهِمْ، فَهُمْ إِلَى أَوْكَارِ الْأَفْكَارِ يَأْوُونَ وَ فِي رِيَاضِ الْقُرْبِ وَ الْمُكَاشَفَةِ يَرْتَعُونَ، وَ مِنْ حِيَاضِ الْمَحَبَّةِ بِكَأْسِ الْمُلَاطَفَةِ يَكْرَعُونَ

My God! Place us among those within the gardens of whose hearts the trees of yearning for You have taken firm root and the assemblies of whose hearts have been seized by the ardour of Your love! They seek shelter in the nests of meditation, feed upon the gardens of nearness and disclosure, drink from the pools of love with the cup of gentle favour.[2]

---

[1] Ibid. 'The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers' (*Munājat al-Muhibbīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 412.

[2] Ibid., 'The Whispered Prayer of the Knowers' (*Munājāt al-'Ārifīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 415.

We also read in the supplication of Kumayl:

اللهم اجْعَل لِّسَانِی بِذِکْرِکَ لَهِجاً وَقَلْبِی بِحُبِّکَ مُتَیَّماً

O God! make my tongue remember You without ceasing and make my heart full of Your love.

Whether we use these kinds of beautiful prayers or our own words to ask God for His love, the important point is the sincerity in our heart.

IV. Remembrance (mindfulness of God)

Remembering God is another key point for gaining love for God, although this by itself can be a result of existence of the God's love because when we love someone, that person will be in our heart and mind all the time. Hence, remembrance works both ways.

Here, by "remembrance", I mean something very general which is being attentive and mindful of God in our minds and hearts. Therefore, it can include any act of worship, any kind of prayer, reciting the Qur'an, and so on, but it can also be practiced in each second of our daily lives when we are studying, working or even talking to others.

God can be our intimate friend (*anīs*)

In our daily lives we may have some friends or relatives whom we love deeply. There is a strong intimacy between us, and we feel very comfortable and peaceful in their presence. We feel much pleasure spending time with them and being in their company. When we are with them, we do not feel lonely anymore, and if we do not see them for some time, we miss them. This kind of relationship develops over time and as a result of spending time with them and cannot be achieved

quickly. This relation is called *uns* in Arabic, and the person that we have this relation with is called *anīs* or *mūnis*.

We can have God as our *anīs* and, indeed, He is the best one.[1] He can be an *anīs* for someone who is lonely and has no one to console.[2] The way to generate such a relationship with God is through constant remembrance.[3] As soon as we remember God, He is in our company, as He says: "I am sitting beside (in the company of) the one who remembers Me."[4] By continuing to remember God and be attentive towards Him, the relation of *uns* is formed and He becomes our *anīs*. Then if we forget Him even for a short period of time, we will miss Him. However, we should reach a point that we do not forget God and do not become heedless of His presence, even for a moment.

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* Prayer of Jawshan Kabīr, p. 441. The Arabic text is as follows:

يا خَيْرَ مُؤْنِسٍ وَأَنِيسٍ

[2] Ibid., p. 433. The Arabic text is as follows:

يَا أَنِيسَ مَنْ لا أَنِيسَ لَه

[3] Ibid. p. 440. The Arabic text is as follows:

يَا أَنِيسَ الذَّاكِرِين

[4] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al*-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 496. The Arabic text is as follows:

امام باقر (ع): أَنَّ مُوسَى(ع) سَأَلَ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ: يَا رَبِّ أَ قَرِيبٌ أَنْتَ مِنِّي فَأُنَاجِيَكَ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ فَأُنَادِيَكَ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِلَيْهِ: يَا مُوسَى أَنَا جَلِيسُ مَنْ ذَكَرَنِي.

Remembering God brings tranquillity and serenity. We read in the Qur'an:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ تَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of God. Look! The hearts find rest in God's remembrance! (Qur'an 13:28)

This tranquillity comes from being connected to the source of absolute power, peace and *raḥmah*.

In addition to tranquillity, remembering God is very much pleasurable and indeed, one of God's names is "the One whose remembrance is sweet"[1] because we are connected to someone who loves us and cares about us more than anyone else. This sweetness is one of the things that we are taught to ask for it. We read in the recommended prayers for the fourth day of the month of Ramadan:

اللَّهُمَّ أَذِقْنِي فِيهِ حَلاوَةَ ذِكْرِكَ

O God! Make me taste the sweetness of Your remembrance.[2]

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* Prayer of Jawshan Kabīr, p. 435. The Arabic text is as follows:

يَا مَنْ ذِكْرُهُ حُلْوٌ

[2] Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali b. Mūsā, *al-Iqbāl bi al-A'māl al-Ḥasanah*, vol. 1, p. 125.

How to become an intimate friend with God

Now let us discuss how we can start or strengthen this sweet and pleasurable relation with God and take it to the extent that God becomes our *anīs*. From God's side, this is done already. We read in the Qur'an:

هُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

> He is with you wherever you may be (Qur'an 57:4)

We also mentioned God's saying: "I am sitting beside (in the company of) the one who remembers Me." Therefore, as soon as we remember God, the relationship starts, and it does not need a specific time or place. However, when we are in the company of someone, normally either they are talking to us or we are talking, or else there is a moment of silence.

God is speaking to us through the Qur'an, so we should listen wholeheartedly. Sometimes He addresses us with "O mankind!"[1] sometimes He says "O you who have faith!",[2] sometimes He calls us His servant and says "O My servants who have faith!",[3] and beautifully and kindly when He addresses His sinful people, He calls them again his servants:

---

[1] «يا أَيُّهَا النَّاس»

[2] «يا أَيُّهَا الَّذينَ آمَنُوا»

[3] «يا عِبادِيَ الَّذينَ آمَنُوا» (Qur'an 29:56).

"O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls!"[1]

He introduces Himself in the Qur'an, He guides us with His words, and teaches us whatever we need for our growth. Sometimes He warns us; many times, He gives us good news. To make us understand, He mentions parables and stories. To the sinful, He gives hope and asks them not to despair. For the ones that have difficulty, He says, "Trust Me, only rely on Me and only ask Me for help. I am the only one that loves you the most and has absolute power to help you. Anytime you ask Me, whether it is day or night, I am near you. I am with you wherever you are."

If we establish a sincere and close relationship with God, He will talk to us in different ways about whatever is needed in addition to the Qur'an. Sometimes we are wondering about an issue and we read a book, hear to a lecture, or hear someone say something, and we find our answer. And even sometimes He may inspire what we need in our own hearts.

This is how God talks to us. How should we talk to God? This is something that many of us may have taken for granted. It is a God-given gift that we can talk to Him[2] and He listens

---

[1] (Qur'an 39:53).

[2] In 'the Whispered Prayer of the Rememberers' (*Munājāt al-Dhākirīn*), Imam Sajjād (a) says:

to us, and even more than that He has asked us to do so. He says in the Qur'an: "Call Me, and I will hear you!"[1]

Hence, we should appreciate this opportunity and talk to God in any condition or situation that we are in – whether we are happy or sad, whether we are in a situation of failure or we are at the peak of our success, whether we are alone or have people around us.

We have received many supplications from Ahl al-Bayt (a) that teach us how to speak to God in different situations. They are a valuable treasure and a rich source of moral and spiritual teachings. Thus, it is very important that prior to using them in our conversation with God, we should read and reflect on them. Then after reflecting and learning the content, we can use the same words to talk to God if our heart connects with those words, or we can use our own words. The important point is that we should say them sincerely and wholeheartedly.

مِنْ أَعْظَمِ النِّعَمِ عَلَيْنَا جَرَيَانُ ذِكْرِكَ عَلَى أَلْسِنَتِنَا، وَ إِذْنُكَ لَنَا بِدُعَائِكَ وَ تَنْزِيهِكَ وَ تَسْبِيحِكَ

Among Your greatest favours to us is the running of Your remembrance across our tongues and Your permission to us to supplicate You, declare Your exalted, and call Your holy!

Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* p. 415.

[1] (Qur'an 40:60)

It is interesting that even in the Qur'an, God has given us some examples of prayers that we can use when we want to talk to Him. Of course, since our connection to God is going to fill every moment of our daily lives, we need to generate our own informal phrases and words too.

Anyway, from the beginning of the day in the morning when we wake up, we should remember and start talking to God. For example, we can start by thanking Him for giving us another day to live.[1] When we want to leave our homes or go to a place, we can talk to Him and ask Him to protect us.[2] When we want to start doing something, we can talk to Him and ask Him for help. When we are reminded of any blessing

---

[1] We read in the prayer for Wednesday by Imam Sajjād (a):

لَکَ الْحَمْدُ اَنْ بَعَثْتَنی مِنْ مَرْقَدی وَ لَوْ شِئْتَ جَعَلْتَهُ سَرْمَدا حَمْدا دائما لا یَنْقَطِعُ اَبَدا وَ لا یُحْصی لَهُ الْخَلائِقُ عَدَدا

To You belongs praise, for You roused me from my sleep, - and had You willed, You would have made it everlasting - an everlasting praise that will never be cut off and whose number the creatures will never count!

Kaf'amī, Ibrāhīm, al-Balad al-Amīn wa al-Dar' al-Ḥaṣīn, p. 131.

[2] For example, we can read the following verse:

رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنی مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَ اَخْرِجْنی مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَ اجْعَلْ لی مِنْ لَدُنْکَ سُلْطاناً نَصیراً

My Lord! Admit me with a worthy entrance, and bring me out with a worthy departure, and render me a favourable authority from Yourself. (Qur'an 17:80)

or receiving any new blessings, we should thank Him. If we are amazed by encountering wonders of the creation, we should praise Him.[1] When we feel weak in dealing with challenges in life, we can express our weakness to our powerful Lord and take refuge in Him for help.[2]

Do not stop talking to God even if you have made a mistake

Even if we have heedlessly committed a wrong action and may feel embarrassed to talk to Him and may feel we have damaged our relationship with Him, our loving God tells us not to worry and come back to Him. He loves us and will forgive all of our sins.[3] Therefore as soon as we become alert, we should start talking to God and ask Him for forgiveness.

---

[1] For example, we can read the following verse:

فَتبارَكَ اللّهُ أحْسَنُ الْخالقينَ

So blessed be God, the best of creators! (Qur'an 23:14)

[2] For example, we can read the following which is part of whispered prayer of Imam Ali (a):

مَوْلايَ يا مَوْلايَ أنْتَ الْقَوِيُّ وَ أنَا الضَّعيفُ وَ هَلْ يَرْحَمُ الضَّعيفَ إلا الْقَوِي

My Lord, O my Lord, You are the Powerful and I am the weak, and who else can be merciful to the weak except the Powerful?

Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* p. 494.

[3] Say: [that God declares,] O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God will forgive all sins. Indeed, He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful. (Qur'an 39:53)

Even more, if we feel too weak to deal with our own evil desires or prevent ourselves from committing wrong actions, we can take refuge in God and complain about ourselves to God and ask Him to help us.[1]

God has many names according to His attributes and actions[2] like *Ra'ūf* (All-Kind), *Khair al-Rāḥimīn* (the Best of the merciful), *Khair al-Maḥbūbīn* (the Best of those who are loved), *Wahhāb* (the Great Giver), *Qadīr* (All-Powerful), *Ghaffār* (All-Forgiver), and *Shāfī* (Restorer of health). We can call upon Him by the name that we relate to according to the circumstances and condition that we are in.

It is amazing that not only we are allowed to call and speak to the creator of the universe but also that He has asked us to do so. As I mentioned earlier, the Qur'an says: "Your Lord has said, 'Call Me.'"[3] We can call upon "my Lord" or "my God" or even in more friendly terms, "my dear God."

The third situation that may occur when we are in the company of someone is moments of silence. This also

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* 'The Whispered Prayer of the Complainers' (*Munājāt al-Shākīn*) by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 407:

إلهي إليكَ أشكو نفساً بالسوء أمّارةً وإلى الخطيئة مُبادرةً

My God, to You I complain of a soul commanding to evil, rushing to offenses, eager to disobey You

[2] More than one hundred names are mentioned in the Qur'an and one thousand names are mentioned in supplication of Jawshan Kabīr.

[3] (Qur'an 40:60)

happens in our relationship with God because remembering Him does not mean necessarily talking to Him. As long as we are attentive to Him and feel His presence, we are connected; therefore, we can experience tranquillity, peace and pleasure.

Having experienced all these three types of connection to God during the day, at the end of the day when we want to sleep, we can say our last words to Him and sleep peacefully. We sleep but He does not: "God there is no god except Him is the Living One, the All-Sustainer. Neither drowsiness befalls Him nor sleep."[1] He will watch over us.

Maintaining a constant connection with God requires much effort because many things cause distraction. However, it does not take long for the relation of *uns* which is based on love to be generated. Then, keeping our connection will be much easier because when God becomes our *anis*, then if we are not connected, we will soon miss Him. And this is also the time that when we receive the invitation for the special meeting – i.e. the call for the daily prayer (*adhān*), our hearts will be ready to benefit the most and it will be the peak of our joy and pleasure.

---

[1](Qur'an 2:255)

V. Loving God's people

The last but not the least point for acquiring God's love is to love others for the sake of God, to gain God's pleasure. Just as loving God is quickest way towards Him, loving others is the easiest way of loving Him. It plays an important role in this regard; therefore, I will discuss it from two different angles.

The pleasure of God in loving His creatures

We are all God's creatures. He loves all of us, and He is pleased when we also love each other. He wants us to form our relationship with one another based on love. Thus, whenever someone is successful in this regard, God will love that person more and he will be also gifted with God's love in his heart. On the night of the *mi'rāj*, God said to the Prophet (s):

> يَا مُحَمَّد وَجَبَتْ مَحَبَّتِي لِلْمُتَحَابِّينَ فِيَّ وَ وَجَبَتْ مَحَبَّتِي لِلْمُتَعَاطِفِينَ فِيَّ وَ وَجَبَتْ مَحَبَّتِي لِلْمُتَوَاصِلِينَ فِيَّ وَ وَجَبَتْ مَحَبَّتِي لِلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ عَلَى
>
> O Muhammad! My love is necessary for those who love each other for My sake, and My love

> is necessary for those who have tenderness for each other for My sake, and My love is necessary for those who meet each other for My sake, and My love is necessary for those who trust Me.[1]

In the continuation of this hadith describing these people, God says:

> أُولئکَ الَّذینَ نَظَرُوا إلَی الْمَخْلُوقینَ بِنَظَری إلَیْهم
>
> These are the ones that look at my creatures in the way that I do.[2]

We have already discussed how much God loves His people even the sinful; therefore, if we want to be among those who love God and God loves them the most, we should look at His people through His eyes. This means we have to open our heart and try to accommodate the love for all God's people in our heart as much as possible. In this way the intensity of the love between God and us can be measured by the extent of our love and care for others.

Characteristics and signs of love for others

True and sincere love is a form of capital and treasure for its owner and has its own characteristics. One of them is that

---

[1] Daylamī, Hasan, *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb*, vol. 1, p. 199.

[2] Ibid.

when we spend it, instead of decreasing, it increases. When we try to love more people and to love them more intensely, our ability and capability to love will increase.

Another characteristic of love is that it is very sweet and brings joy and peace in the heart not only to the receiver but also to the giver.

Forgiving someone who has done wrong to us and being ready to sacrifice what we have for the benefit of others are some of the outcomes of true love at this deep level. When we reach this level, it means that we have become selfless and empty of our egos to a great extent, if not completely. This is another characteristic of true love and this is the way that loving others cleans and purifies our hearts, so they are qualified to receive the blessing of love for God.

However, it must be emphasised that loving others functions in this way and becomes a means to help us move closer to God when the intention is purely gaining God's pleasure and is not love independently. In fact, loving someone independently besides God can be a great obstacle. When the intention is God's pleasure, loving more people is a sign of more presence of God in the heart but an independent love can be a sign of impurity of the heart. We have only one heart:

مَّا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ

> God has not put two hearts within any man.
> (Qur'an 33:4)

We should only let God be present there. We read in a beautiful hadith:

> الْقَلْبُ حَرَمُ اللَّه فَلاتُسْكِنْ حَرَمَ اللَّه غَيْرَ اللَّه
>
> The heart is the sanctuary of God so do not let someone other than God settle in it.[1]

Moreover, someone who loves others with the intention of God's pleasure never gets disappointed or heartbroken when the receiver does not reciprocate. Although this is another characteristic of love – that often when someone initiates love it affects the heart of the receiver and the receiver sooner or later will respond to it and it will become reciprocal – there may be cases where the receiver does not respond or even responds in the opposite way. In such cases, if the love is independent, the lover may become disappointed or heartbroken, but when the love is for the sake of God's pleasure, there will be no expectation for a response, and therefore the lack of reciprocity will not lead to disappointment.

---

[1] Shu'ayrī, Muhammad, *Jāmi' al-Akhbār,* p. 185.

Loving people is a Godly act

Until now, I have been discussing loving one another as a way to acquire God's love so that we can move faster on our spiritual journey. Now I am going to discuss its relationship with the spiritual journey from another angle.

We have been created by God out of love and with the purpose of going towards our own perfection. As God is the most perfect being, going towards perfection means attaining proximity to God. Certainly, this does not mean proximity in time or place because God the Almighty is the creator of time and place; therefore, He is too exalted to be limited by time and place or to fit into them.

God the Almighty has many qualities that are signs of His perfection like knowledge, wisdom, power, patience, benevolence and love. Hence, proximity to God, which is an existential nearness, can be achieved by resembling Him by acquiring His qualities as much as our limited capacity permits.[1] In religious sources we read:

تخلقوا بأخلاق الله

Equip yourself with divine traits of character.[2]

---

[1] Māzandarānī, Muhammad, *Sharḥ al-Kāfī,* vol. 9, p. 352.

[2] Majlisī, Muhammad Taqī, *Rawḍah al-Muttaqīn fī Sharḥ Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 312.

Of course, the qualities that are meant here are those qualities that are available for us because some of them, like grandeur and creatorship, are exclusive to Him. However, in the Holy Qur'an, the mercy of God (*raḥmah*), more than any other trait, is repeated and emphasized; thus, it can be said that acquiring this quality has a special place in achieving proximity to God. It means the more someone gets closer to God, the more the one will manifest God's love and compassionate for others.

I mentioned earlier that mercy (*raḥmah*) is a special kind of love which is accompanied by giving and comes without expectation. This kind of love can only be practiced in our relationship with creatures of God because we do not have anything to offer to God. He is rich and without any need. Moreover, whatever we have, even our very being, is a gift from Him. The kind of love that we can have for God is called *ḥubb* or *maḥabbah*. This type of love is not necessarily accompanied by giving but can become very intense and at its high level is called *'ishq*. In the Qur'an, *raḥmah* and *ḥubb* both are attributed to God.

However, we can have *raḥmah* and *ḥubb* for all God's people in general and believers in particular, and this is the way we can resemble this important quality of God in both the level of inclusive (*raḥmah Raḥmānīyyah)* and exclusive (*raḥmah Raḥīmīyyah)* love. And this is, indeed, the way on which God

the Almighty wants us to base our relation among ourselves as His people who have the same Lord and have been created from the same mother and father.

Hence, we see in the Qur'an and hadith that in addition to *raḥmah*, qualities and virtues such as good-temperedness, lenience, generosity, charity, benevolence and forgiveness, all of which are outcomes of love, are emphasised. The following are some instances from hadith and verses of the Qur'an in this respect.

Loving everyone

For example, regarding love and *raḥmah* for everyone, we read in a *qudsī* hadith that God says:

> الْخَلْقُ عِيَالِى فَأَحَبُّهُمْ إِلَىَّ أَلْطَفُهُمْ بِهِمْ وَ أَسْعَاهُمْ فِى حَوَائِجِهِمْ
>
> People are my dependents (like family); the most lovable to me are those who are most affectionate towards them and struggle the most to provide their needs.[1]

The Prophet Muhammad (s) also is quoted as saying:

> الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِى الأَرْضِ يَرْحَمْكُمْ مَنْ فِى السَّمَاءِ

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 199.

> God shows mercy to those who are merciful. Be merciful to those who are on the earth so that the one who is in the heaven shows mercy to you.[1]

Another hadith says:

> أبلغ ما تستدرّ به الرّحمة أن تضمر لجميع النّاس الرّحمة
>
> What brings mercy down the most is to have mercy for everyone in your heart.[2]

Love among believers

Regarding *raḥmah* and love for believers, since all the believers are supposed to follow the path of God, resemble His qualities and listen to His words, it should become mutual among them, and many religious teachings talk about a collective way of love and *raḥmah*. A hadith says:

> تواصلوا و تباروا و تراحموا و كونوا اخوة برة كما أمركم الله عز و جل
>
> Connect to each other and deal each other with kindness and show mercy to each other and be

---

[1] Ibn Abī Jumhūr, Muhammad, *ʿAwālī al-Laʾālī al-ʿAzīzīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Dīnīyyah,* vol. 1, p. 361.

[2] Tamīmī, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-*Kalam, p. 216.

kind brothers as God the Almighty has commanded you.[1]

In another hadith, the Prophet (s) says:

> The example of the believers in their mutual love, mutual affection, and sympathy is like different parts of one body. If one part of the body has a problem, the rest of the body will show sympathy by having a fever or not being able to sleep.[2]

It is very important that believers not only should try and make an effort to form relationships with others based on love and *raḥmah*, but they should also advise each other to do so in order that it becomes a general current in the whole society. God says in the Qur'an:

> ثُمَّ كانَ مِنَ الَّذينَ آمَنُوا وَ تَواصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَ تَواصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ
>
> Then will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion. (Qur'an 90:17)

---

[1] Kufī Ahwāzī, Ḥusain, *al-Zuhd,* p. 22.

[2] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-Anwār,* vol. 58, p. 150. The full text in Arabic as follows:

> قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّه (ص): مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ فِی تَوَادِّهِمْ وَ تَرَاحُمِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى بَعْضُهُ تَدَاعَى سَائِرُهُ بِالسَّهَرِ وَ الْحُمَّى.

In addition to the verses and hadiths that in general teach the believers to have love and *raḥmah* for all God's people and also practice it among themselves, there are many verses of the Qur'an and hadith that emphasise love and *raḥmah* for specific groups of people such as parents, spouses, children, orphans, the elderly, the needy, the sick, wrongdoers, and even enemies. Moreover, there are many hadith regarding *raḥmah* towards animals and plants.

It clearly shows that the Islamic teachings guide us towards a universe full of love and mercy. When everyone is loved, taken care of and happy, God will be pleased too.

The following are some examples of verses of the Qur'an and hadith about love for and compassion towards specific groups.

Family members

The closest relationship normally is formed among the members of a family. In this regard the Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

أَحْسَنُ النَّاسِ إِيمَاناً أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقاً وَ أَلْطَفُهُمْ بِأَهْلِهِ وَ أَنَا أَلْطَفُكُمْ بِأَهْلِي

> The best people in faith are those who are the most good-tempered and the kindest to their families, and I am the kindest to my family.[1]

The family is the first and the best ground for children to get to know love and taste its sweetness and then learn how to pass it on to others. Parents are pillars of a family, so love has to be generated between them, and then they can offer it to the children. When husband and wife start a sincere relationship, then God will connect it to His source of love. It can be understood from the following verse:

> وَ مِنْ آياته أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْواجاً لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْها وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّ فى ذلكَ لآيات لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُون
>
> And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between you. Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. (Qur'an 30:21)

Thus, this love between husband and wife is a gift of God, and if they use it to seek God's pleasure, it will be kept pure from any selfishness. It will be developed and will make life pleasant for the whole family. It will also have a strong effect on the proper upbringing of the children. Experiencing love

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad, *'Uyūn Akhbār al- Riḍā (a)*, vol. 2, p. 38.

and compassion at home not only helps children form a relationship based on love and respect with their parents and other members of the family and, on a greater scale, members of the society, but also it makes them ready to understand God's love for them and makes their hearts ready to love Him.

In addition to the love bestowed upon husband and wife to which the verse above refers, there is an extra and indescribable share of love which has been gifted to mothers. Mothers go through so much suffering and sacrifice many things for the benefit of their children, but because of the power of love that God has put in their hearts, they do everything with pleasure. If they can make their intention pure and Godly, then they can transform this treasure of love to love for God and speed up in their spiritual journey. Of course, even if they do it only for the sake of their children, they will still be rewarded by God.

Although after all I said, it seems natural that parents love their children and do their best to take care of them, in Islamic sources, much emphasis has been put on love for children and we even see hadiths that recommend specific ways of showing love to the children like kissing them. The Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

مَنْ قَبَّلَ وَلَدَهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَهُ حَسَنَةً وَ مَنْ فَرَّحَهُ فَرَّحَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

God will write a reward for the one who kisses his child, and God will bring happiness on Judgement Day to the one who makes his child happy.[1]

Hadiths like this remindes us that taking care of children and meeting their needs out of love is only the minimum. Love should also be expressed in our words and behaviour. For example, our tone of our voice and appellations such as "dear" help our love to penetrate their hearts and generate joy in their hearts. Another example that can be very applicable these days is to listen to children patiently when they want to talk. When they need to talk, they should not feel that we are waiting for them to finish soon because either what they are saying is not important or we have something more important to do; we should be careful of what messages we send even through the way that we are looking at them. A beautiful smile or a kind look in the eyes can be effective.

We will be successful parents if we let our children have the experience of obeying someone out of respect and love rather

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 6, p. 4.

than fear so that then they can practice it in their relationship with God.

Even when a parent is going to reject their request for their own sake, he or she should do it gently and kindly. When children do something wrong, it is not necessary to react harshly. A reaction out of anger may work when children are younger, but it may break the bond of love and make them rebellious when they are older, and we may completely lose them when something very serious happens.

Love of children for their parents

As long as the children are young and they need their parents, there is a greater chance that they will reciprocate their parents' love. However, as soon as they become independent, they may neglect their parents especially if they are now old, weak, and challenged with illnesses. Therefore, God has demanded the highest degree of respect, kindness, and love from children towards the parents. For example, in the Chapter 17 of the Qur'an, being kind to parents is mentioned next to monotheism; this means that being good towards parents has the highest level of importance after the unity of God.[1] Then God describes the manners that children should have towards their parents in the way they speak and behave:

---

[1] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 13, p. 79:

وَ قَضىٰ رَبُّکَ أَلاتَعْبُدُوا إِلا إِيَّاهُ وَ بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَکَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلاهُمَا فَلاتَقُل لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَ لاتَنْهَرْهُمَا وَ قُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلا كَرِيمًا وَ اخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَ قُل رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and that you be kind to parents. Should they reach old age at your side – one of them or both – do not say to them, "Fie!" And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them, out of mercy, and say, "My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!" (Qur'an 17:23-24)

There are also numerous hadiths in this regard, an example of which is this hadith of the Prophet (s) in which he says:

نَظَرُ الْوَلَدِ إِلَى وَالِدَيْهِ حُبّاً لَهُمَا عِبَادَةٌ

The look of a child towards his parents out of love for them is an act of worship.[1]

«وَ بِالْوالِدَيْنِ إِحْساناً» عطف على سابقه أى و قضى ربک بأن تحسنوا بالوالدين إحسانا أو أن أحسنوا بالوالدين إحسانا و الإحسان فى الفعل يقابل الإساءة. و هذا بعد التوحيد لله من أوجب الواجبات.

[1] Ibn Shu'bah Ḥarrānī, Ḥasan, *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 46.

In addition to that we read in another hadith that, one is not allowed to look at their parents with anger even if they have wronged him.[1]

The elderly

The elderly are another group of people that in Islamic teachings we are explicitly recommended to show love and *raḥmah* to, even if they are not our family members. Although aging is often associated with physical disability and therefore requires more attention and care, it is necessary to exhibit care, love and kindness towards the elderly with politeness and respect. The old men and women of today were the strong and active people of yesterday who took care of their families and were respected by others. Now they may be physically less capable and feel insecure about receiving sufficient attention and respect. It is love along with respect that provides them with a sense of security. God Who has concern for and is aware of everyone's need encourages people to provide this security for the elderly by promising

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 2, p. 349. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِی عَبْدِ اللَّه (ع) قَالَ: مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى أَبَوَيْهِ نَظَرَ مَاقِتٍ وَ هُمَا ظَالِمَانِ لَهُ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ صَلَاةً.

them that it will be exchanged for security on the Day of Judgement.[1]

The ill

When a person becomes severely ill, they are in need of attention and care. Therefore, showing love and *raḥmah* to the ill is highly recommended in Islamic teachings. It can be expressed in the form of visiting, nursing, or meeting their needs such as helping them with treatment expenses.[2] Regarding visiting the ill, the Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

> وَ مَنْ عَادَ مَرِيضاً فَإِنَّهُ يَخُوضُ فِي الرَّحْمَةِ وَ إِذَا جَلَسَ عِنْدَ الْمَرِيضِ غَمَرَتْهُ الرَّحْمَةُ
>
> Whoever pays a visit to a patient will be immersed in *raḥmah* and mercy, and if he sits beside him, mercy will surround him.[3]

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 2, p. 658. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

مَنْ عَرَفَ فَضْلَ كَبِيرٍ لِسِنِّهِ فَوَقَّرَهُ آمَنَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَزَعِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

[2] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Thawāb al-A'māl wa 'Iqāb al-A'māl,* p. 289. The full text is Arabic is as follows:

مَنْ قَامَ عَلَى مَرِيضٍ يَوْماً وَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَعَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْخَلِيلِ (ع) فَجَازَ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ كَالْبَرْقِ اللامِعِ وَ مَنْ سَعَى لِمَرِيضٍ فِي حَاجَتِهِ فَقَضَاهَا خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ كَيَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ

[3] Ṭūsī, Muhammad, *al-Amālī,* p. 182. The Arabic text is as follows:

The needy

Helping needy people is recommended by virtually all religions. In the Qur'an, it is considered a sign of a true believer and in many verses, it is mentioned along with maintaining the prayer: "Those who keep up prayer and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them" (Qur'an 8:3-4). It seems impossible to seek God's love and gain His pleasure and at the same time be indifferent to His people's needs. In Qur'an 2:177, describing piety and righteousness after mentioning major beliefs, the Qur'an talks about those who, out of God's love, give their wealth to people in need:

وَ لَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَ الْمَلائِكَةِ وَ الْكِتَابِ وَ النَّبِيِّنَ وَ ءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِى الْقُرْبَى وَ الْيَتَامَى وَ الْمَسَاكِينَ وَ ابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَ السَّائِلِينَ وَ فِي الرِّقَابِ وَ أَقَامَ الصَّلَوةَ وَ ءَاتَى الزَّكَوةَ

But it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the messengers; to spend of your wealth, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask,

---

وَ مَنْ عَادَ مَرِيضاً فَإِنَّهُ يَخُوضُ فِى الرَّحْمَةِ وَ إِذَا جَلَسَ عِنْدَ الْمَرِيضِ غَمَرَتْهُ الرَّحْمَةُ

and for [the freeing of] the slaves; to be steadfast in prayer and to give regular charity (*zakāt*).

Moreover, we should be careful that charity work is not done only to provide people with their needs (whatever they may be); rather it should also be an act of love. Giving is to be accompanied by love and compassion, otherwise it may hurt people's feelings. Hence, in addition to many hadith and verses of the Qur'an which encourage people to be charitable, there are others that instruct us to love the poor,[1] visit them, and be in their company.[2]

Therefore, even if we have nothing to give but love, we can show it through some comforting words. In Chapter Isrā', God explains this beautifully:

---

[1] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 8, p. 8. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

امام صادق (ع): فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فِی إِخْوَانِكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ الْمَسَاكِينِ فَإِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَقّاً أَنْ تُحِبُّوهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ رَسُولَهُ (ص) بِحُبِّهِمْ

[2] Mufīd, Muhammad, *al-Amālī,* p. 221. The Arabic text is as follows:

امام علی (ع): أُوصِيكَ يَا بُنَيَّ بِالصَّلَاةِ عِنْدَ وَقْتِهَا وَ حُبِّ الْمَسَاكِينِ وَ مُجَالَسَتِهِم

وَ إِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُل لَّهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا

> And if you have to overlook them [for now], seeking the mercy of your Lord which you expect [in the future], speak to them a word of kindness. (Qur'an 17:28)

Orphans

All I said about the needy is applicable to the orphans. Of course, it is not the case that every orphan is necessarily a needy. There are orphans who are well off and only need to be loved. A hadith from the Prophet (s) relates that a man who was complaining from cold-heartedness came to the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) said to him: "Do you want your heart to be softened? Be merciful to an orphan. Caress his head and feed him your food."[1]

Wrongdoers

Love and *raḥmah* are not exclusively for good people. Another group of people whom Islamic teachings encourages us to have love for are the wrongdoers. When we talk about

---

[1] Pāyandeh, Abū al-Qāsim, *Nahj al-Faṣāhah*, p.160. The Arabic text is as follows:

ارحم اليتيم و امسح رأسه و أطعمه من طعامك

manifesting the inclusive *raḥmah* and God's love, it does not exclude anyone. The Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

رَأْسُ الْعَقْلِ بَعْدَ الدِّينِ التَّوَدُّدُ إِلَى النَّاسِ وَ اصْطِنَاعُ الْخَيْرِ إِلَى كُلِّ بَرٍّ وَ فَاجِرٍ

> The peak of good reason after religious devotion is treating people with love, and doing good to both good and bad people[1]

If someone has wronged us, the first level of *raḥmah* is to forgive for the sake of God's pleasure. This forgiveness also would be a kind of relief for ourselves from the anger or grief caused by that wrongdoer's action. In the Qur'an, to encourage us to forgive, God beautifully asks us to forgive others as we would expect Him to forgive us:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

> And let them excuse and forebear. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. (Qur'an 24:22)

The second level of showing *raḥmah* is to be kind and loving and do good to them. Then the power of love may change them and make them our intimate friend:

---

[1] Imam Riḍā (a), *Ṣaḥīfah al-Imam Riḍā (a)*, p. 52.

وَ لا تَستَوِی الْحَسَنَةُ وَ لاَ السَّیِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتی هِیَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذی بَیْنَکَ وَ بَیْنَهُ عَداوَةٌ کَأَنَّهُ وَلِیٌّ حَمیمٌ

Good and evil [conduct] are not equal. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so] behold, he between whom and you was enmity will be as though he were an intimate friend! (Qur'an 41:34)

Loving others is the conduct of the Prophet (s)

After mentioning verses and hadiths that put emphasis on having love for specific groups of people, now I will reflect on the life of the Prophet (s) as our role model to learn how to apply these teachings in our daily lives.

As we mentioned earlier, out of His love God sent the Prophet Muhammad (s) to guide people through his teachings and also to be a role model for them.

The Prophet (s) says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى بَعَثَنِي هُدًى وَ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِين

> God the Almighty sent me as guidance and love for all the nations.[1]

He started his mission and established the foundation of his work on love.[2] He loved people intensely and had immense concern for them, as God says in the Qur'an: "There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he is full of concern for

---

[1] Nūrī, Ḥusain, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbaṭ al-Masā'il*, vol. 13, p. 219.

[2] Ibid. vol. 11, p. 173. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ (ص) قَالَ : الْحُبُّ أَسَاسِي

you."[1] This was to such a degree that God consoled the Prophet (s) by telling him:

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ ءَاثَارِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِهَٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

> Then maybe you will kill yourself with grief, in sorrow over them, if they do not believe in this discourse. (Qur'an 18:6)

In this section, first I will mention some examples from the life of the Prophet (s) with respect to his inclusive love for people which includes non-believers, and then I will mention his attitudes towards believers who went to him and could benefit more from the manifestation of God's love in his conduct.

The Prophet's love for non-believers

What happened in the battle of Uḥud is an instance of the intensive love and compassion of the Prophet (s) for the pagans, even the ones that started to fight him. As is narrated, on that day, during the battle, the Prophet's beloved uncle Ḥamzah was martyred, the Prophet's teeth were broken, and his face also was wounded. This afflicted his companions so

[1] (Qur'an 9:128)

much that they asked the Prophet (s) to curse the enemy. He answered:

> I was not sent to curse, but to be a *raḥmah* and mercy for the people.

Then he added:

> Our Lord! Guide my people because they do not know.[1]

The Prophet (s) not only forgave them but prayed for them; he called them "my people" and made an excuse for what they did in that "they do not know."

Another instance of the inclusive *raḥmah* of the Prophet (s) is the incident that happened on the day of the conquest of Mecca. On that day, Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah, who was carrying the flag of Islam when he encountered Abū Sufyān,[2] composed this poem:

---

[1] Qummī, 'Abbās, *Satīnah al-Biḥār*, vol. 2, p. 681. The full text is Arabic is as follows:

> و روی انّه لمّا کسرت رباعیته و شجّ وجهه یوم أحد شقّ ذلک علی أصحابه شدیدا و قالوا: لو دعوت علیهم، فقال: انّی لم أبعث لعّانا و لکنّی بعثت داعیا و رحمة. اللّهم إهد قومی فانّهم لا یعلمون.

[2] The leader of the pagans.

> Today is the day of revenge, today is the day of the loss of the honour of the people and the property of the enemies, and the day of the Quraysh's humiliation.

Abū Sufyān asked the Prophet (s): "Have you commanded [them] to massacre your people while you are the kindest to your people? The Prophet (s) took the flag from Sa'd and composed this poem:

> Today is the day of *raḥmah*, today is the day of glory for Quraysh, today is the day when God has magnified the Ka'bah.[1]

Although the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his companions for years had been cruelly persecuted by the pagans of the Quraysh to the degree that they had to abandon their homes and migrate to Medina, he prevented any violence against them. The Prophet (s) announced his decision about them with these words: "I will say about you what my brother Joseph said about his brothers," then recited this verse:[2]

لا تَثْريبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَ هُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمين

---

[1] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Sharḥ Naj al-Balāghah,* vol. 17, 272. The Arabic text is as follows:

اليوم يوم المرحمة، اليوم اعز الله قريشا، اليوم يعظم الله فيه الكعبة

[2] Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 4, p. 225.

> There shall be no reproach on you today. God will forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful. (Qur'an 12:92)

Thus, the Prophet (s) forgave them and told them: "You can go; you are free." This affection and love of the Prophet (s) affected the pagans so much that they came to him in groups and embraced Islam: "And you saw the people entering in God's religion in groups" (Qur'an 110:2).

The Prophet's love for the believers

Having mentioned some examples of manifestation of the Prophet's intensive *raḥmah* and love for unbelievers, we will now mention some verses and hadith which explain his compassion and mercy for the believers.

Being a good listener was one of the characteristics of the Prophet (s). This is a quality that is not easily achievable. Even if someone does not talk that much, it still does not necessarily mean that he is a good listener. Love is one of the important factors that give us power to achieve this quality.

The Prophet (s) used to listen to people kindly and patiently and show them affection and love. He would accept their excuses. Even if they would say something which was not true, he would not accuse them explicitly of lying. But the hypocrites saw this good character of the Prophet (s) as a sign of weakness and accused him of being naive and of listening

to the words of the people too much. Therefore, in defence of the Prophet(s), the following verse was revealed:

> وَ مِنْهُمُ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَ وَ يَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ قُلْ أُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَ يُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ
>
> Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, "He is an ear." Say, "An ear that is good for you. He has faith in God and trusts the faithful, and is a mercy for those of you who have faith." (Qur'an 9:61)

God told them that it was in their best interest if the Prophet (s) listened to their words. The Prophet (s) knew the facts but because he was caring and kind, and at the same time a wise leader, he listened to the words of all with compassion, kindness, and patience, and if he did not accuse people of lying when they said something wrong, it was because he wanted to preserve their dignity and give them the opportunity to repent.

As we mentioned, an important factor in being able to interact with people patiently is loving them especially when they do something to us which is very inconvenient. In Medina some people used to enter Prophet's house without permission; sometimes when they were invited for food, they would go very early and stay till the food became ready. Even after eating, they would not leave the house and would keep talking.

It was very disturbing for the Prophet (s), but out of love and *raḥmah* he would not say anything because he did not want to upset them. It continued to the extent that God, to help His merciful prophet, revealed this verse:

يَاأَيُّها الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لاتَدْخُلُواْ بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نَاظِرِينَ إِنَاهُ وَ لَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُواْ فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانتَشِرُواْ وَ لامُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَالِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِى مِنكُمْ وَ اللَّهُ لايَسْتَحْيِى مِنَ الْحَقِّ

> O you who have faith! Do not enter the Prophet's houses unless permission is granted you for a meal, without waiting for it to be readied. But enter when you are invited, and disperse when you have taken your meal, without settling down to chat. Indeed, such conduct torments the Prophet, and he is ashamed of [asking] you [to leave]; but God is not ashamed of [expressing] the truth. (Qur'an 33:53)

We also read in hadith that he was like a compassionate and affectionate father towards everyone.[1]

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *'Uyūn Akhbār al- Riḍā (a)*, vol. 1, p. 318. The Arabic text is as follows:

صَارَ لَهُمْ أَباً رَحِيماً

Whenever he saw someone he was the first person to greet them, whether that person was elderly or a child, rich or poor.[1] He was always cheerful, good-tempered and lenient.[2] When someone shook hands with him, he did not take away his hand first.[3] Whenever anyone sat beside him, he would wait patiently long enough for the person to be the first to leave. He would treat everyone in a way that they would feel that they were the most important person to him.[4]

When he was asked for a favour, if he could fulfil their wish, he would do it, and if it was not possible then he would make up for it with kind words.[5] On occasions when someone was rude to him or asked for something in a harsh manner he would not retaliate; instead he would reply with patience and love.[6]

If someone went to him while he was in the middle of his prayer, he would quickly complete his prayer and ask how he could help.[7] Or if he was praying and he heard a baby cry, he

---

[1] Daylamī, Ḥasan, *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb*, vol. 1, p. 115.

[2] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad, *'Uyūn Akhbār al- Rıdā (a)*, vol. 1, p. 318.

[3] Daylamī, Ḥasan, *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb*, vol. 1, p. 115.

[4] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad, *'Uyūn Akhbār al- Rıdā (a)*, vol. 1, p. 318.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. p. 319.

[7] Qummī, 'Abbās, *Safīnah al-Biḥār*, vol. 2, p. 691; Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Muhammad b. Ali, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib (a)*, vol. 1, p. 147.

would finish the prayer quicker so the mother who was praying could take care of the baby.[1]

When one of his companions felt gloomy, he would try to lift his spirit by making jokes.[2] If he did not see one of his companions for more than three days, he would ask about him. If he was away, the Prophet (s) would pray for him and if he was in town, the Prophet (s) would visit him especially if he was ill.[3]

The following is part of a description of the Prophet (s) by Imam Ali (a):

> He was the most generous of people, and the most big-hearted of them. He was the most truthful of people in speech. He was the most compassionate and kind-hearted. Anyone who came in close contact with him and knew his excellent character loved him. The one who tried to describe him would have to say: "I have not seen before him or after him anyone who resembles him."[4]

---

[1] Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, vol. 2, p. 344.

[2] Shahīd Thānī, Zayn al-Dīn b. Ali, *Kashf al-Rayhah*, p. 83.

[3] Ṭabarsī, Ḥasan b. Faḍl, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, p. 19.

[4] Ibid. p. 18.

These are only few examples of Prophet's life and the way he treated people and delivered God's message.

The Prophet (s) invited people to believe in their Lord with love and *raḥmah*, and then with affection and love, gently and softly trained the believers. He could change people who were worshipping idols, killing each other, even killing their daughters alive and many human values were not practiced in their community into a community of believers in God that were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their sacred beliefs and for each other.

Speaking about the key point of the Prophet's success, God says in the Qur'an:

> فَبِما رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ
>
> It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely, they would have scattered from around you. (Qur'an 3:159)

How to practice love in our lives

Reflecting on the conduct of the Prophet (s) and how he practiced the principle of love in his life, now it is the time to reflect and find the examples for practicing love in our own lives, starting with our family members, our friends, our colleagues, classmates, neighbours, people we share the same traditions with, and people we share belief in one God with, and then extend it to all human beings.

The act of love is to make people happy, and it can be practiced in a kind way of looking at someone, the lovely smile on our face, the soft tune of our voice, the kind words we speak, listening patiently to someone, giving gifts, and an unlimited way of helping people that differs according to people's situations and our capability.

Then our love should lead us in a broader vision to care for all humanity and try – according to our potential and capacity – to work to establish peace, unity and love in the whole world. It does not matter how much work we do. What matters is that we do our best according to our maximum capacity and do it together. Even if we cannot do things on a large scale, wishing to do so and wishing good for everyone in the world and praying for them will be counted in the eyes of God and will make us grow in our spirituality.

By being attentive and mindful of God and practicing this kind of love for His people, we hope to reach a level that we can truly and sincerely address God and say to Him:

يَا نَعِيمِي وَ جَنَّتِي وَ يَا دُنْيَايَ وَ آخِرَتِي أَنْتَ غَايَةُ مَطْلُوبِي وَ مُنَايَ

لَكَ مَحْيَايَ وَ مَمَاتِي

O my bliss and my paradise! O my this world and my hereafter![1] You are my ultimate end and desire[2] for You is all my life and my death.[3]

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Zād al-Ma'ād,* The Whispered Prayer of the Devotees by Imam Sajjād (a), p. 412.

[2] Ibid., The Prayer of Ṣabāḥ by Imam Ali (a), p. 387.

[3] Ṭūsī, Muhammad, *al-Amālī,* p. 17.

Bibliography

A Group of Scholars (1984), *al-Uṣūl al-Sittah ʿAshar* (Qum: Dār al-Shabistarī).

Daylamī, Ḥasan (1412 A.H.), *Irshād al-Qulūb ilā al-Ṣawāb* (Qum: al-Sharīf al-Raḍī).

Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad (1417 A.H.), *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍāʾ fī Tahdhīb al-Aḥyāʾ* (Qum: Muʾassasah Nashr Islāmī).

Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad Muḥsin (1406 A.H.), *al-Wāfī* (Isfahān: Kitābkhāneh Amīr al-Muʾminīn).

Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad Muḥsin, *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī* (Tehran: Maktabah al-Ṣadr).

Ḥillī, Ḥasan (1982), *Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī).

Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan (2001), *al-Jawāhir al-Sanīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsīyyah* (Tehran: Dehqān).

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (1404 A.H.), *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah* (Qum: Maktabah Āyatullāh al-Marʿashī al-Najafī).

Ibn Abī Jumhūr, Muhammad (1405 A.H.), *ʿAwālī al-Laʾālī al-ʿAzīzīyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Dīnīyyah* (Qum: Dār al-Sayyid al-Shuhadā).

Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1378 A.H.), *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a)* (Tehran: Nashr Jahān).

Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1398 A.H.), *al-Tawḥīd li al-Ṣadūq* (Qum: Jami'ah Mudarresīn).

Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1406 A.H.), *Thawāb al-A'māl wa 'Iqāb al-A'mäl* (Qum: Dār al-Sharīf al-Raḍī).

Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1966), *Ilal al-Sharā'i'* (Qum: Dāwarī).

Ibn Bābawayh, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1997), *Amālī li al-Ṣadūq* (Tehran: Kitabchī).

Ibn Manẓūr, Muhammad (1414 A.H.), *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr).

Ibn Namā al-Hillī, Ja'far b. Muhammad (1406 A.H.), *Muthīr al-Aḥzān* (Qum: Madraseh Imam Mahdī (a)).

Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Muhammad b. 'Alī (1379 A.H.), *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib (a)* (Qum: 'Allāmah).

Ibn Shu'bah Ḥarrānī, Ḥasan (1404 A.H.), *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl* (Qum: Jāmi'ih Mudarrisīn).

Ibn Ṭāwūs, 'Alī (1409 A.H.), *Iqbāl al-A'māl* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyyah).

Ibn Ṭāwūs, 'Alī b. Mūsā (1997), *al-Iqbāl bi al-A'māl al-Ḥasanah (al-Ḥadīthah)* (Qum: Daftar Tablighāt Islāmī).

Imam Riḍā (a) (1406 A.H.), *Ṣaḥīfah al-Imam Riḍā (a)* (Mashhad: Kongireh Jahānī Imam Riḍā (a)).

Imam Sādiq (a) [attributed to] (1400 A.H.), *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'ah* (Beirut: al-A'lamī).

Imam Sajjād (a), al-Saḥīfah al-Sajjādīyyah.

Jawādī Āmulī, 'Abdullāh (2002), *Tasnīm Tafsīr Qur'an Karīm* (Qum: Markaz Nashr Isrā).

Kaf'amī, Ibrāhīm (1418 A.H.), *al-Balad al-Amīn wa al-Dar' al-Ḥaṣīn* (Beirut: Mu'assisah al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt).

Kufī Ahwāzī, Ḥusain (1402 A.H.), *al-Zuhd* (Qum: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Ilmīyyah).

Kulaynī Muhammad (1407 A.H.), *al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyyah).

Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir (1403 A.H.), *Biḥār al-Anwār* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī).

Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir (1423 A.H.), *Zād al-Ma'ād* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt).

Majlisī, Muhammad Taqī (1406 A.H.), *Rawḍah al-Muttaqīn fī Sharḥ Man La Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* (Qum: Kūshānbūr).

Makārim Shīrāzī, Nāṣir (1421 A.H.), *al-Amthal fī Tafsīr Kitāb Allah al-Munzal* (Qum: Madrasah al-Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (a)).

Māzandarānī, Muhammad (2003), *Sharḥ al-Kāfī* (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-Islāmīyyah).

Mufīd, Muhammad (1413 A.H.), *al-Amālī* (Qum: Konigre Shaykh Mufīd).

Narāqī, Aḥmad, *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādah* (Qum: Hijrat).

Nūrī, Ḥusain (1406 A.H.), *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il wa Mustanbaṭ al-Masā'il* (Qum: Mu'assisah Āl al-Bayt (a)).

Pāyandeh, Abū al-Qāsim, *Nahj al-Faṣāḥah* (Tehran: Dunyā-ye Dānesh).

Qummī, 'Abbās (1414 A.H.), *Safīnah al-Biḥār* (Qum: Usweh).

Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī, Sa'īd (1409 A.H.), *Qiṣaṣ al-'Anbīyā'* (Mashhad: Markaz Pazhūhishhā-ye Islāmī).

Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Husain, (1411 A.H.), *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'an*, (Beirut: Dār al-Shāmīyyah).

Shahīd Thānī, Zayn al-Dīn b. 'Alī (1390 A.H.), *Kashf al-Raybah* (Tehran: Dār al-Murtaḍawī).

Shahīd Thānī, Zayn al-Dīn b. 'Alī, *Musakkin al-Fu'ād* (Qum: Baṣīratī).

Shomali, Muhammad Ali and Heydarpour, Mahnaz "Image of God in the Qur'an", in *God's Existence and Attributes* (London: Islamic Centre of England).

Shomali, Muhammad Ali (2015), *Islamic Belief System* (London: Islamic Centre of England).

Shu'ayrī, Muhammad, *Jāmi' al-Akhbār* (Najaf: Matba'ah Haydarīyyah).

Suyūṭī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (1404 A.H.) *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* (Qum: Maktabah Āyatullāh al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī).

Tabarsī, Ḥasan b. Faḍl (1412 A.H.), *Makārim al-Akhlāq* (Qum: al-Sharīf al-Raḍī).

Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Seyyed Muhammad Ḥusayn (1390 A.H.), *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Mu'assisah al-A'lamī li al-Maṭbū'āt).

Tamīmī, 'Abd al-Wāḥid (1410 A.H.), *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (Qum: Dar al-Kitāb al-Islāmī).

Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan (1411 A.H.), *Miṣbāḥ al-Mujtahid wa Silāḥ al-Muta'abbid* (Beirut: Mu'assisah Fiqh al-Shī'ah).

Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan (1414 A.H.), *al-Amālī* (Qum: Dār al-Thaqāfah).

Warrām Ibn Abī Farās (1410 A.H.), *Majmū'ah Warrām* (Qum: Maktabah Faqīh).

Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd (1407 A.H.), *al-Kashshāf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī).